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The End of the Pius Wars • Joseph Bottum

Talking Democracy • Gilbert Meilaender

"Thinly Disguised Totalitarianism" • Raymond J. de Souza

St. Benedict After September 11 • John M. Owen IV

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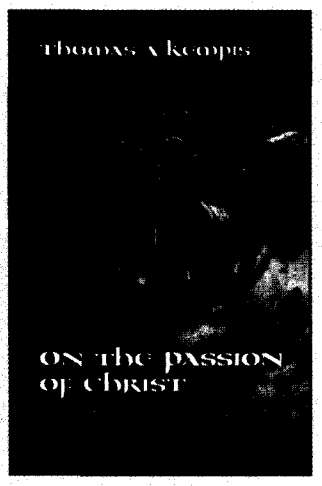

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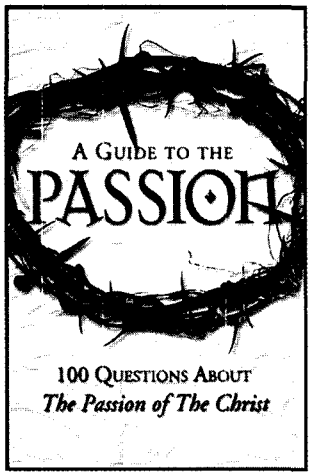

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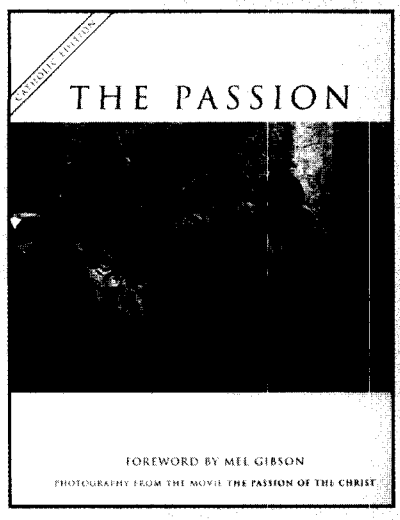

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Luther, the Controversy

I noted with interest Edward T. Oakes' review of *Luther* ("Luther, the Movie," January). His remarks about the film's theological deficiencies were well founded. What I found disappointing were Father Oakes' wholly unnecessary swipes at Lutheranism. Two can play at this game. For example, the striking inconsistency between what the Vatican says and what American Catholics believe. A recent survey reveals that average worship attendance in Roman Catholic parishes nationwide lags behind Protestant congregations (though neither group has much to boast of in this respect). Fr. Oakes saved his cheapest shot for a comment on the contrast between celibacy and clerical marriage. Does Fr. Oakes really want to do this? In response, would it be unfair to wonder if such an imposed celibacy does not provide a breeding ground for immoral homosexual and heterosexual behaviors in the Roman priesthood in this country? My point in mentioning these things is simply to ask that FIRST THINGS help its authors exercise restraint when they are tempted to indulge in such polemics. Indulgences, of this and other kinds, strike this Lutheran as, to say the least, unhelpful.

(The Rev.) Paul T. McCain
President/CEO
Concordia Publishing House
St. Louis, Missouri

One does not expect a Jesuit commentator to offer a paean of praise for a movie about Martin Luther.

The first paragraph of Edward T. Oakes' review of *Luther* informs us that the Church of England is in a bad way. He then segues into comments about Lutheranism's diminishing numbers.

That out of the way, in the third paragraph Father Oakes speculates darkly that the movie "might be a total bomb." He was not disappointed. He found fewer than twelve patrons in the theater, judged the film to be "monumentally dull," and was astonished that it "makes no effort to give the viewer any notion of what the real Luther was like." Worse, he is alarmed that so much money went into producing such a flop.

But there is more. Fr. Oakes is surprised that the "lumpy" word "justification" is not once mentioned, that the Diet of Worms scenario is given such cavalier treatment, that Frederick the Wise and Luther are caught off guard by the event they have precipitated, that Luther's wife, Katherina von Bora, comes across as a "sex-starved Long Island housewife"—a curious observation coming from a Jesuit—and, finally, that when the going gets tough the writers and director "resort to shameless hokum."

Did I see the same movie? We all have our individual filters. Though not a Lutheran, I found much merit in the film, not least the winsome scenes where Luther, with his engaging command of Scripture, offers his various congregations words of pure grace, words that in all likelihood were being heard by them for the first time. If nothing more (and there is more), the presentation of the contrast between the theologies of Johann Tetzel and Luther, as well as the superb acting of Joseph Fiennes and Peter Ustinov, makes the film both memorable and inspiring.

Duane A. Walker
Carlsbad, California

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In his review of *Luther*, Edward T. Oakes says that he thought the film was dull. And yet, Father Oakes wanted Johannes Eck's interrogation of Luther to resemble a theological debate more than a grilling by the House Un-American Activities Committee. He also would have preferred Katherina von Bora to be less shrewish and Luther's encounter with the devil to be something other than the "writhings of a schizophrenic." If these things are dull, one is tempted to ask Fr. Oakes what he considers exciting. While the world would probably be a better place if films that got down to the details of justification by faith were as popular as *Finding Nemo*, a filmmaker who acts on that assumption will soon be out of a job.

Fr. Oakes has made the mistake of criticizing *Luther* for not being the film he wanted to see. He forgets that when a film is made for commercial release (as opposed to for free evangelical or educational distribution), its first goal is to be entertaining to as many people as possible. Historical and theological precision is much farther down the list of priorities. The need for dramatic energy is why *Luther* starts with a bang—literally—as the famous lightning bolt sends him into the monastery. From that point on the action never stops. While it is true that the real Luther was older and fatter than Joseph Fiennes, the actor does portray well Luther's courage, his flair for the dramatic, and his pivotal role in a complex and dynamic period of history.

While a theologian such as Fr. Oakes may be unimpressed, I hope his disappointment will be offset by the thought that a portion of the moviegoing public now knows a little more about Luther than they did before, and at least some of what they know is accurate.

Karl D. Stephan
San Marcos, Texas

Edward T. Oakes replies:
My review of the movie *Luther* seems to have been misunderstood. What I took to be a whimsical and lighthearted essay has somehow been taken as an attack on Lutheranism. Granted, I'm not a Lutheran. Still, when I saw at the end of the film's credits that two Lutheran bodies underwrote the project, I could only assume that most Lutherans would be as disappointed in the final result as I was; or actually even more so, since it was their money, after all, that was being squandered on a movie that makes such a hash of Luther's own witness and theology. Karl D. Stephan defends such corned-beef hash with that time-honored Hollywood trump card, the box office. Unfortunately for Mr. Stephan's thesis, the movie bombed, which perhaps should be a lesson for us all. Attempts to lure the unchurched to the gospel by emptying it of its theological contents for entertainment purposes won't even be entertaining (*pace* Duane A. Walker), let alone effective as a tool for evangelization.

That was the real gravamen of my review, which makes doubly puzzling Paul T. McCain's accusation that my (very short) essay was spent entirely in taking potshots against Lutheranism. Quite the contrary. Even if I was naïve in thinking I could adopt the persona of a fleeced Lutheran, I took no position whatever in the review itself on the relative merits of a married and celibate clergy, justification and works, and so on. All I said was that if the movie wanted to recommend, for example, a married clergy, it sure went about it eccentrically, by making Luther's wife act like a pinch-lipped shrew. But at least I can agree with the Rev. McCain on one point: rates of church attendance tell us something about the health of our respective churches. Although I cannot prove it here, I am sure that drops in church attendance at Catholic parishes are rooted in the same strategies that have emptied the mainline Protestant churches. Buying into the very secular presuppositions that one is supposedly trying to convert people *from* is a strategy so obviously self-contradictory that it is bound to fail.

Famously irenic ecumenist that I am, someone who would never dream of following the example of St. Paul (or of Martin Luther for that matter) by indulging in Christian polemics of my own, I shall pass over the Rev. McCain's cheap shots. But if it's any consolation to him, I could equally point to some Catholic boondoggles that cost a lot of money and did nothing whatever to advance the gospel, such as the Pope John Paul II Museum in Washington, D.C., or the abortive attempt by the U.S. Catholic bishops to set up their own TV network to rival Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network on cable. But let me end by thanking the writers for the letters. Even if they all misread my essay, at least they seem to take Martin Luther's theology more seriously than did the silly movie I reviewed.

Debating Free Exercise

I very much enjoyed Vincent Phillip Muñoz' article ("Establishing Free Exercise," December 2003). He has exposed the incoherence of the Supreme Court's establishment clause jurisprudence and ably demonstrated how that jurisprudence has become a powerful enemy of the free exercise clause. I must disagree, however, with Mr. Muñoz' historical exegesis and with his reading of the two religion clauses.

According to Mr. Muñoz, the Founders (James Madison in particular) intended the establishment clause to prohibit any special privileges to religious citizens, while the free exercise clause prohibits any special penalties against them. Mr. Muñoz' "no privileges, no penalties"

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interpretation of the religion clauses would require government to strike a pose of strict neutrality, neither favoring nor penalizing religion in any particular. History, however, does not favor Mr. Muñoz. The same Congress that passed the First Amendment also established the Congressional chaplaincy system and authorized salaries for the ministers who staffed it. Most of the early Presidents (including Washington, John Adams, and Madison) issued proclamations designating national days of prayer and thanksgiving to God. As president of the University of Virginia (a public school), Jefferson decreed that his students attend chapel at least once a week. As President of the United States, Jefferson obtained the Senate's approval for a treaty with the Kaskaskia Indians, which, among other things, paid the salary of a Catholic priest to minister to the Indians' needs.

Justice Joseph Story, the leading constitutional law scholar in the early nineteenth century, argued that the First Amendment accorded well with "the general if not universal sentiment in America . . . that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state so far as was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship." In a careful dissent in the 1985 *Wallace v. Jaffree* case, Justice William Rehnquist concluded that Madison "saw the Amendment as designed to prohibit the establishment of a national religion, and perhaps to prevent discrimination among sects. He did not see it as requiring neutrality on the part of government between religion and irreligion."

This view departs dramatically from Mr. Muñoz' reading of the establishment clause as "prohibit[ing] the state from singling out *religious citizens* [rather than religious *denominations*] for special legal privileges" (emphasis added). This distinction is critical because a legal, constitutional commitment to absolute neutrality between religion and irreligion is culturally unstable: every society inevitably creates a cultural environment that is either supportive of or hostile to religion. Forty years after the Supreme Court declared *state-sponsored* prayer in the public schools unconstitutional, too many public school officials are still trying to purge those institutions of overt signs of *individual* devotion and religious expression.

The better, and historically more accurate, view of the religion clauses is twofold: the free exercise clause prohibits government from discriminating against individuals on the basis of their religious views; and the establishment clause prohibits the government from discriminating for or against religious denominations or traditions. Neither clause prevents the government from promoting or encouraging the expression of religious sentiment in the public square. This approach would end the evisceration of the free exercise clause (which Mr. Muñoz rightly decries) and allow the government, unapologetically, to make room for religion in public life.

Joseph G. Cosby, Esq.
Arlington, Virginia

I found Vincent Phillip Muñoz' article to be clear and helpful. But I wonder if he might discuss what I find to be an ambiguity in the way the Supreme Court uses the word "religion." Its meaning in the thinking of the Founders seems to be clearly spelled out by Madison as "the duty we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it." Yet much of the current discussion uses the term in a more expansive way to mean just about any comprehensive worldview. No longer is a concept of God necessary. It seems to me that recent jurisprudence has been affected by this shift in meaning away from the one embedded in the Constitution.

It also seems that in filing his suit about the Pledge of Allegiance, Michael Newdow is assuming this latter-day definition of religion. In order for Newdow to claim that his daughter was somehow harmed "when compelled to watch and listen" to the recitation of the Pledge, with its acknowledgment of God, he must view his daughter as an atheist (her mother would dispute this) whose injury is an impediment to the free exercise of her religion. Indeed, if her injury were not of this sort, then she could have no complaint, since she was not punished for refusing to participate. Otherwise, anyone could claim injury anytime he was subjected to, or even overheard, unpleasant or displeasing speech. This would render any notion of free speech null and void.

If the Court decides that Newdow's injury took the form of an infringement upon free exercise, then it will be acknowledging atheism as a religion, just as it might give this status to nontheistic forms of Buddhism, Wicca, or a host of other cultural possibilities, including extreme environmentalism. In this eventuality, government would become incapable of maintaining anything resembling religious neutrality, since the public funding of just about any secular activity could be construed as supporting the religion of atheism.

The incoherence of this position is as obvious as it is destructive.

Jake Noland
College Station, Texas

Vincent Phillip Muñoz replies:
I thank Joseph G. Cosby and Jake Noland for their letters.

Mr. Cosby blames me for faulty "historical exegesis," claiming the "no privileges, no penalties" approach I suggest misinterprets the religion clauses. To clarify the record, I never attributed "no privileges, no penalties" to the Founders as a whole or suggested that it represents Con-

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gress' "original intention," as Mr. Cosby claims. However, my article makes clear, I believe, that "no privileges, no penalties" represents a distinctly Madisonian approach to church-state jurisprudence.

The original meaning of the establishment clause has been exhaustively debated by scholars and Supreme Court Justices. Mr. Cosby favors the "non-preferential" approach first advocated by Justice Rehnquist in *Wallace v. Jaffree.* Whatever might be said in its defense, that interpretation does not capture the original meaning of the establishment clause. In drafting the First Amendment, Congress sought to make clear that the new national government lacked jurisdiction over matters of religion—that is, church-state arrangements, including the question of religious establishment, remained a matter of state jurisdiction. This is why the amendment begins with the word "Congress" and includes the awkward phrase "respecting an." In the minds of the drafters of the First Amendment, Congress lacked authority to make a law "respecting an establishment" because the state governments possessed all constitutional authority over that field of legislation. Congress did not intend, as Mr. Cosby (and Justice Rehnquist) claim, to mandate that government treat all religions equally.

The reason that the Founders did not adopt "non-preferentialism" is because it is bad constitutional law. While some of the Founders thought government could and should nurture religious sentiment, all agreed that if government did support religion, it should distinguish between those religions that support republican principles and those that are hostile toward them. They certainly would not agree to a principle that cannot distinguish Judaism and Christianity from Wahhabism.

I advanced Madison's "no privileges, no penalties" principle because it offers a formula that a majority of the Supreme Court might accept. It does not perfectly capture the establishment clause's original meaning, but returning to the original meaning is impossible without overturning the incorporation of the establishment clause—something no sitting Supreme Court Justice has entertained.

Mr. Noland rightly criticizes the Court for failing to adopt a coherent or consistent definition of "religion." It should be noted, however, that Michael Newdow's claim is not that his daughter's "free exercise" right was violated, but rather that public school teacher-led recitations of the Pledge violate the establishment clause. If the Supreme Court were to rule that merely hearing the words "under God" violates an individual's right to religious free exercise, it would be, as Mr. Noland suggests, incoherent and destructive. But even the contemporary Supreme Court, I pray, is not that foolish.

Cowling on Lewis

David B. Hart's essay on Maurice Cowling, "A Most Partial Historian" (December 2003), is terrific. It is beautifully written, with many excellent observations and much wisdom. If the books in Cowling's trilogy are half as interesting as the review, they must make good reading.

I am perplexed, however, at Mr. Hart's approval of Cowling's critique of C. S. Lewis (an "uncomfortably accurate pastiche"). Cowling's assessment—as well as Mr. Hart's approval of it—seems odd. Mr. Hart has done a good job of describing Cowling as a fairly cloistered academic, whose curmudgeonly rants against modernity have not gained him much of an audience. This is exactly the opposite of Lewis, whose clarity and appeal on the subjects Cowling holds dear are second to none, and whose arguments on behalf of the faith have stirred millions of highbrows and lowbrows, intellectuals and "common" men and women, of the past and current century. Lewis was all that Cowling apparently is not, among both academics and the rest of us. Cowling's criticisms of Lewis sound like those of a talented yet inferior Monday-morning quarterback criticizing Terry Bradshaw for some defects of form while not acknowledging that he led the Steelers to four Superbowl triumphs.

Richard K. Mason
Altadena, California

David Hart replies:
First, let me remark that I am fairly certain that Richard K. Mason is the first person ever to draw a comparison between C. S. Lewis and Terry Bradshaw. Johnny Unitas would have been nearer the mark, of course, but really in matters so exalted one should draw one's analogies solely from baseball.

Second, let me assure Mr. Mason that I yield to no one in my esteem for Lewis, and have long thought him a profounder theologian than even his most fervent admirers often grasp. Moreover, Cowling's criticisms of Lewis are, measured by his standards, exceedingly mild. Nonetheless, his is an "uncomfortably accurate pastiche" for all that. To an American ear, especially many decades after the fact, Lewis' one notorious flaw as a writer is probably all but inaudible; but in his time and place, many of the breezy expressions he employed to make himself "accessible" often had about them the ponderous quality of an inauthentic demotic. Imagine such a man today, in the midst of an otherwise wholly lucid and compelling essay, suddenly writing, "and here is where Christianity offers a really cool answer," and you will understand what prompts Cowling's (gentle) satire.

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Which Diversity?

In "Diverse Diversities" (January), Barry Bercier presents a false opposition between an ideological commitment to diversity and a serious and sober university. Yes, many contemporary defenses of diversity are philosophically shallow and undermine the university's search for truth. However, we can endorse cultural diversity without appealing to such defenses. John Paul II showed how this is possible in his remarkable 1995 address to the United Nations General Assembly. In the early 1990s, demagogues took multiculturalism to terrible extremes, killing hundreds of thousands of people in the name of ethnic solidarity.

At the same time, new nations emerged, demanding recognition of their cultural heritage. Confronting these realities, the Pope maintained that the human person always navigates between universal and particular values. Cultures, he insisted, must acknowledge the person's dignity and rights, setting limits on dangerous cultural chauvinism. However, they must also protect a culture's particularity, because it represents one way of understanding the mystery of human existence. Diverse cultures point to the transcendent dimensions of human life, revealing the extraordinarily rich ways humanity relates to God.

Contra Bercier, it is not justice that demands that we value diversity, but respect for the person's struggle to understand his existence. John Paul II has taken this argument to places such as Cuba and the Republic of Georgia, and he has used it to oppose globalization's homogenizing influence on cultures. He has repeatedly insisted that a healthy approach to cultural diversity creates a dynamic exchange between the universal and the particular. This vision applies as much to the university as it does to the world of nation-states, and it provides educational institutions with ample philosophical justification for promoting diversity as a means of pursuing truth.

In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom revealed how cultural relativism dangerously undermines the mission of the university. Since his death, others have repeated his criticisms, and at the beginning of this century, we should be fully aware of them.

It is high time we move beyond such negative critiques and embrace a positive vision of a university that properly values cultural diversity.

Derek S. Jeffreys
Assistant Professor of
Humanistic Studies and Religion
University of Wisconsin, Green Bay

Barry Bercier replies:
Derek Jeffreys is surely on the mark, insisting that there is a kind of diversity—one *not* defined by the current ideology of diversity—that is a proper concern of the university. And he's also correct to attribute the source of that diversity to the immeasurable richness of the human person.

But I'd go one step further to say that there is yet another crucial source for diversity—one that arises, oddly enough, from the defects of our race. The story of the great city of Babel makes the point. When all people of our world together, "speaking one language," are threatened with subordination to any single and global human power, God Himself acts to break up our language, fracture our works, and scatter us to the four corners of the world. Political and cultural diversity, coming here even at the cost of much strife and confusion, is better than the dissolution of the image of God in men who have been made hopelessly uniform.

The current ideology of diversity works against this sober rebuke to Babylonian arrogance. In the name of a kind of universal peace it seeks to undo the serious claims that any particular culture—the Judeo-Christian West in particular—would make for itself. But proper cultural self-assertion is a necessary, even if ambivalent, trait for children of Adam like ourselves—one that serves and saves the freedom and dignity of us all. The ideology of diversity seeks the reduction of all cultures to a placid universality, a somehow noncontroversial equality in a single, homogeneous, and global culture of all cultures.

There is a dichotomy here: On the one side, the university seeking the truth about man; on the other, the ideologues of Babel obscuring and falsifying that truth at every turn.

Gadamer's Being

In his informative essay on Heidelberg philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer ("Gadamer & the Light of the Word," January), Edward Tingley argues in favor of Martin Heidegger's ousiology, the ousiology that informs Gadamer's major work *Truth and Method* (1960). I would argue against this move.

The Greek term *ousia* is usually translated as "essence." What is meant by ousiology, then, is a discourse that essentializes Being. By way of illustration, Mr. Tingley gives us many ousiologemes from which to choose: "Being is speaking to us. And all Being will lead us home." Or: "Language has placed us in connection with Being, and in such a way that we can receive the guidance to live fully." Or: "Being is speaking to us—in effect, it hears our most intimate questions and holds out the answer." Or: "The more you know about Gadamer's sense of Being, the closer it brings you to your own God." Or: "Hermeneutics is entering into the presence of Being itself."

Identifying Being with essence, ousiology collapses the Mosaic distinction between uncreated Being

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(God) and created Being (creatures). Gadamer's teacher Heidegger had already denigrated the Mosaic distinction as "onto-theological" and therefore not properly philosophical. Gadamer follows suit, and in so doing obscures the "genuinely philosophical import" of the real distinction between existence and essence, the real distinction between God as the pure act of existence and his creatures as recipients—precisely as creatures—of the gift of existence.

As Jean Grondin, Gadamer's biographer, writes: "At most, he [Gadamer] professed what Plato called 'the divine,' though only in the neuter: this neuter, he thought, referred to no living being, as for Aristotle and later the Catholic Church, but signified that we all know that we have not made ourselves and our death is out of our hands. For that reason, Gadamer stated ironically, the Catholic Church could only appeal to Aristotle. Plato was too spiritual for it." In reply, I would suggest that Gadamer's attempt to ironize a purportedly sub-Platonic church signals a failure on his part to understand how a revised version of Plato's "doctrine of participation" plays into the Catholic synthesis. If God is Being itself; if God is the pure act of existence; if God's existence is his essence, then creatures as creatures can only be what we are: "partakers" of existence, not however as emanations of God but as recipients—in our very status as creatures—of the gift of existence conferred by God.

John F. Maguire
Natural Law Jurisprudence Center
Berkeley, California

Edward Tingley replies:
When I first read John F. Maguire's letter I was a little nonplussed. Now that I have read it many times, I declare myself officially at a loss as to what to reply, as I didn't knowingly "argue in favor of Heidegger's ousiology," and if by accident I did so (which I strongly doubt) it was unintentional, since I have little idea what that means. Mr. Maguire calls this "the ousiology that informs Gadamer's major work *Truth and Method*." Well, that could mean either that Gadamer's work is riddled with a grand theory about Being lifted from Heidegger (but I doubt that and so I feel pretty relaxed on this score) or that some of what Gadamer says about Being is genuinely Heideggerian (which probably is true but strikes me as rather slight support for heavy-duty terminology like "Heidegger's ousiology").

If in saying that "*ousia* is usually translated as 'essence,'" Mr. Maguire is reporting a traditional error of translation, I'm all ears. I might be on his side if I knew his argument—but then one of us would first have to say something concrete about Being and essence. Not only did I not use the term "ousiology," I neither translated *ousia* nor made a single mention of "essence."

If Heidegger collapsed the Mosaic distinction between created and uncreated being, that tells us nothing about his pupil. "Gadamer follows suit"? Try as I might, I can't find any identification of Being with essence in Gadamer's talk about Being or in the expressions I used to convey it.

When I say the real implication of his work is that "Being is speaking to us" and will "lead us home," I am not saying anything about what Being *is* (essence or anything else). I was talking about what Being seems to *be doing* all around us. I was trying to get at the astonishing implication of the grace that, by the "light of the word" (in Scripture, poetry, conversation, and language of all kinds), shows us what is, allowing us to find our way.

That is an extraordinary sort of care for us. It is not us caring for ourselves. That there are "linguistic events" of the sort I mentioned—"unauthored" communications that reoriented the lives of Frankl and St. Augustine, and marked the path they saw was theirs—is phenomenal, an illustration of God's concern, presence, and means of communication. Well, in any event, that is what I was trying to say.

Mary and Ecumenism

As one who takes great interest in the quest for Christian unity, I was delighted to learn of *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, recently issued by the interdenominational *Groupe des Dombes* ("Protestants, Catholics, and Mary," Public Square, January). It is no small accomplishment when Protestant theologians consider the two Marian dogmas defined by the Catholic Church—namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption—as "legitimate conclusions flowing from reflection by the Catholic consciousness of the faith and its internal coherence," even if they conclude that the acceptance of these dogmas would not be required for church unity.

The proposal seems to rest on the premise that "legitimate conclusions" are not necessarily ontologically *true* conclusions; otherwise, communion in the fullness of truth would demand their acceptance. As irrevocably committed as the Catholic Church is to ecumenism, I cannot imagine the Magisterium ever endorsing the demotion of defined dogmas to the status of venerable opinion. From the Catholic side, the Marian dogmas are *de fide*, not because they cohere with the whole network of Christian doctrine (not all intrasystemically valid beliefs are binding on the faithful), but because St. Peter's successors have unerringly affirmed them.

Are we, then, at an impasse? Not necessarily. Like Richard John Neuhaus, I find much promise in the ecumenists' awareness that the fundamental Protestant-Catholic

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differences, especially in soteriology and ecclesiology, converge on the Mother of God. For Catholics, Mary literally embodies what it means to be fully redeemed by Jesus Christ and deified by grace, first here on earth and then in the glory of heaven; she is the perfect icon of the Church and the icon of the perfected Church. Ascertain the truth about her and the rest will eventually fall into place.

But does "the rest" include the vexing question of ecclesiastical authority? It has been noted in these pages that Pope John Paul II insists (following Vatican II) that authority is subordinate to, and in the service of, a much larger "Marian" enterprise, namely, Christian discipleship (see "Evangelicals in the Church of Mary," December 2000). Discipleship encompasses, among many other things, preserving and passing on the deposit of faith without distortion, yet with true development—a complex process involving the lay faithful as well as their pastors, as John Henry Newman explained. Ecumenical doors remain open so long as Scripture, the development of doctrine, and the Magisterium are seen as part of the Church's "Marian" experience of receiving God's Word, pondering it, "magnifying" it (explicating what was implicitly understood), and authoritatively expounding its marvelous implications for all who live in Christ—starting with the first Christian.

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Missal Clarifications

First of all, I want to thank Richard John Neuhaus for calling attention to my article "Theological Principles that Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal (1970)" (While We're At It, January).

For the sake of clarification, however, it should be noted that in the article I only examine the eleven orations advanced by the *peritus* who headed the study group charged with the revision of orations as examples of how the principles of reform were concretely applied. I do not draw any conclusions about the character of the orations of the new missal as a whole. My article goes no further than identifying disturbing alterations to the original texts of a very small number of prayers and calling for further study so that we may know whether similar changes were made throughout the corpus, and, if so, to what effect.

Also, Father Neuhaus reports that I blame the problems of the Latin missal on the haste with which it was assembled. While I do remark that the revisers did a huge amount of work in a relatively short period of time, I do not argue that haste is the cause of the deficiencies it contains. If I were to speculate, I would guess that the problems uncovered in the study derive from presuppositions that were brought to the task rather than from the hurry with which it was done. Nevertheless, while Fr. Neuhaus seems to welcome hurry in remedying the weaknesses of the Paul VI missal, my personal view is that haste in dealing with things as delicate and deep as our liturgical texts, no matter how pressing the need, can only result in further harm.

Dr. L. Pristas
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Necessary Judicial Activism

"The Culture Wars Go International" (Public Square, January) identifies a range of very significant concerns about judicial activism. Nonetheless, here in India the judicial activism enabled by the "suo moto" power of judges is the last redoubt against a political culture of rampant corruption and caste politics. If Indian politics can eventually change this self-destructive culture, then we will have to see if the judiciary has the self-control to return areas of its activism to democratic processes. But in the meantime the well-being of Indian society owes a great deal to its activist judges.

Chris Barrigar, Ph.D.
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Opinion

"Thinly Disguised Totalitarianism"

Raymond J. de Souza

In 2003, the chief appellate court of the province of Ontario unanimously ruled that the common law definition of marriage in force in Canada ("one man and one woman") was unconstitutional, as it violated the equality guarantees of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms (an amendment to the Canadian constitution, somewhat analogous to the U.S. Bill of Rights, but passed only in 1982). The Ontario decision followed similar provincial court decisions in British Columbia and Quebec. While the British Columbia and Quebec decisions struck down the old law, a standard practice in findings of unconstitutionality, the Ontario court went further: it decreed that Ontario's marriage laws must be *immediately* rewritten to include homosexual couples. With uncharacteristic alacrity, Toronto City Hall began issuing same-sex marriage licenses that very afternoon: five hours elapsed between the court's decision and the first gay wedding at City Hall, and Ontario instantly became a magnet for gay couples seeking to "marry." The decision made international headlines as a major victory for gay activists. But that was only the beginning. The subsequent federal government response and ensuing public debate revealed that religious liberty itself is under attack in Canada. Indeed, the fracas over gay marriage has underscored that a totalitarian impulse has infected the Canadian body politic. "Totalitarian" is, admittedly, a hard word, but I believe it is required in this instance.

In response to the Ontario ruling, the federal government of then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (supported by his successor, Paul Martin) decided not to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. Instead it introduced legislation that would amend the definition of marriage in line with the court directive, with a clause that would specifically exempt clergy from having to solemnize gay unions. Having chosen thus to embrace gay marriage, the federal government then referred the proposed law to the Supreme Court. (Canadian law allows the federal government to ask the Supreme Court for its opinion on proposed legislation.) The government specifically asked the Court whether the proposed clergy exemption was compatible with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The reference question is deeply worrisome. It is widely expected that the Supreme Court will approve the exemption for clergy—though one can never be sure. But the fact that the question is even being asked is an ominous portent. The Canadian federal government has asked the chief judicial authority whether a bill which exempts religion's blessings of marriage from government redefinition is constitutional. One would hope that the question need not even be asked. Yet so advanced is the totalitarian impulse in Canada that advocates of the federal redefinition of marriage positively boast of how broad-minded they are in allowing churches to administer their own sacraments as they see fit.

The freedom of churches to administer the sacraments is as fundamental a religious liberty as there can be. That freedom is not granted by statute, for the freedom is not the state's to grant. Does the government's "reference" to the Supreme Court indicate its actual doubt about whether churches are free to administer sacraments? It is more likely that because certain public benefits flow from a religious marriage, the government is seeking the Court's opinion in order to forestall some adventurous human rights tribunal from forcing a clergyman to perform a same-sex marriage. Given that these tribunals have recently been given the authority to adjudicate Charter claims, it is likely only a matter of time before one of them acts.

That is the worst-case scenario of state expansion. But state expansion will likely pass other milestones on its way there, eroding religious liberty on questions related to marriage. First it will be churches forced to rent out their halls and basements for a same-sex couple's wedding reception. Then it will be religious charities forced to recognize employees in same-sex relationships as legally married. Then it will be religious schools not being allowed to fire a teacher in a same-sex marriage. Then it will be a hierarchical or synodal church not being allowed to discipline an errant priest or minister who performs a civilly legal but canonically illicit same-sex marriage. All of this can happen short of the worst-case scenario specifically exempted in the federal government's proposed law.

The federal government's decision was followed a few weeks later by the release of a Vatican document which instructed Catholic politicians that they could

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have no part in advancing gay marriage. The Canadian bishops followed that up with frank statements in support of the Vatican argument, and many wrote letters on the subject to be read in their parishes. Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary warned Prime Minister Chrétien, a Catholic, that he was putting his soul in danger. In response, the swords of the cultural elites were unsheathed.

The airwaves were filled with outrage that Catholic bishops would presume to speak about marriage and salvation—those having now become public, and therefore entirely secular, matters. The *National Post* editorial board, usually sympathetic to traditional social mores, told the Vatican to "butt out." Former *Globe and Mail* editor-in-chief William Thorsell, a leading spokesman for all things progressive, solemnly warned that if the Catholic Church was going to stick its nose into political business, it had better be prepared for all the "brickbats" that accompany political involvement.

All of this demonstrates that the Canadian understanding of the vital importance of religious liberty is enervated indeed. In the space of a few months, the state has moved into a sphere previously thought beyond its competence—namely, the definition of marriage—and the political culture has denounced the religious leaders who dissented. That the Vatican document and the episcopal letters were examples of pastors speaking to their own church members made the cultural response all the more worrisome.

The gay marriage question is not the only issue which has eroded religious liberty in Canada. The gay activist agenda as a whole has been particularly successful on a range of issues. Here are four examples, three judicial and one legislative.

1. Trinity Western University, a private university affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church, was denied a license to certify teachers by the British Columbia College of Teachers because its code of student conduct prohibited, among other things, homosexual relationships (it also prohibited other sins against chastity). While the university eventually prevailed at the Supreme Court of Canada in 2001, lower courts agreed with the College of Teachers that prohibiting homosexual relationships is unacceptable because it might lead future public school teachers to harbor a discriminatory animus against homosexuals.

2. In March 2000, Scott Brockie, owner of a printing business, was fined $5,000 by the Ontario Human Rights Commission for refusing to print letterhead and cards for the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives. Protesting that his Christian faith prevented him from promoting homosexuality, Brockie had declined the order back in 1996. The Commission ruled that his religious beliefs did not entitle him to turn down business from homosexual groups.

3. In 2002, an Ontario lower court ordered a Catholic high school to admit one of its students, Mark Hall, to the school prom with his boyfriend. The principal of the school had previously decided that such a same-sex couple would not be admitted to the prom. In the course of the hearing, the judge took it upon himself to hear arguments about the status of Catholic teaching on homosexuality. While he accepted the local bishop's articulation of Catholic doctrine, he determined that it was not the only view of the matter and sided with the gay student. Even though the prom is long since over, the matter is still working its way through the courts on appeal.

4. Finally, last year the Canadian House of Commons passed a bill that added sexual orientation to the list of "hate speech" categories in the criminal code. Hate speech is a criminal offense if it promotes hatred toward an identifiable group. It was originally introduced into the criminal code to deal with racism, and particularly anti-Semitism. Should the bill become law, the state will be called upon to judge how opinions on homosexuality are delivered. While the bill has yet to clear the Senate, religious groups have raised concerns that—following the Trinity Western, Brockie, and Mark Hall cases—public expression of orthodox moral judgments regarding homosexuality could now be legally penalized.

The public policy goal of rooting out discrimination against homosexuals has opened a huge new area of civil life to the power of the state, as it now seeks to regulate the socializing policies of schools, the practices of private businesses, and perhaps even the preaching and teaching of churches.

Homosexuality is not the only issue on which religious liberty is imperiled; medical practice is another. In British Columbia, the introduction of abortifacient drugs—"emergency contraception" or the "morning-after pill"—has posed a moral challenge for pharmacists. They were permitted to dispense the drug without a prescription, and the regulatory body of pharmacists indicated that it would be mandatory for all pharmacists to dispense the drug. It was argued that the public policy decision to grant a monopoly to pharmacists over the dispensing of drugs meant that their consciences had to take a back seat to a "public health" need. The case is still being debated, but it indicates that threats to religious liberty are not limited to the courts or even the legislatures. The vast array of professional bodies that are

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granted privileges by the state can be used as ancillary agents of state power to constrain those professionals who dissent on religious grounds from a particular policy, even if the matter has nothing to do with the dissenter's professional competence.

A current example, still under internal adjudication, relates to a Canadian medical student who was failed in his obstetrics rotation for his statement that he would not do abortions. Not that he actually refused to do abortions—the issue did not arise in the event—but he said that he would not do them as a doctor. The Canadian Medical Association guidelines include a "conscience clause" which states that no doctor can be forced to do abortions. A medical student is in a rather fragile position: his professional future is in his superior's hands and he has no other option. There are no Christian medical schools in Canada. Should he not be vindicated by his university (or eventually the courts), the state monopoly on medical education granted to public universities will have been used to punish incorrect opinions on abortion.

The danger of authentic democracy degenerating into totalitarianism was summed up by Pope John Paul II in a highly relevant passage from *Centesimus Annus* in 1991:

> Authentic democracy is possible only in a state ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person. It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals, and of the "subjectivity" of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility. Nowadays there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and the basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism.

That last sentence stings. Could our democracy become a "thinly disguised totalitarianism"? Surely the Holy Father was not talking about Canada? In 1991, perhaps his words did not apply. They certainly do apply now. Canada is not a totalitarian state, but the totalitarian impulse is very thinly disguised indeed, and the signs on the horizon are ominous.

When religious liberty is lost, democracy—even if it maintains the structures and procedures of the democratic state—is lost. So the stakes are very high. That is why John Paul has stressed throughout the twenty-five years of his pontificate that religious liberty is the first liberty. Religious liberty means that there are areas where the state may not go. It means that the state may not coerce consciences. A democracy that loses its respect for religious liberty has lost its respect for limited government. Such a democracy, infected by the totalitarian impulse, may continue to wear the guise of democracy while heading in the opposite direction.

A full-fledged totalitarian state recognizes no limits to state power. There are no spheres where the state is not competent to act. But before totalitarianism triumphant, there is the totalitarian impulse, which may be understood as the ambition of the state to extend its authority to realms where it has no authority. The totalitarian impulse is a threat to democracy because it seeks to overturn the democratic value of limited government. The totalitarian impulse necessarily seeks to limit religious liberty.

A pithy definition of totalitarianism was offered by one of its fiercest practitioners, Benito Mussolini: "Everything within the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state." Mussolini, even in a staunchly Catholic country in which he could never control the Church, realized that, in theory, totalitarianism cannot abide anything that makes claims about a realm beyond the state. In other words, it cannot abide the truth claims that religious liberty protects.

There are no restrictions on freedom of worship in Canada today. Canadians can practice their faith unmolested by the state. But increasingly, full participation in civil, commercial, and professional life is requiring that religiously grounded beliefs be left at the door. The threat is coming not only from courts and legislatures, but from tribunals, regulatory bodies, and professional associations. The gay marriage issue has attracted most of the attention. But the threat to religious liberty reaches much farther. It reaches toward everything, as in "totality."

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Alzheimer's & Grace

Stephen G. Post

This seeing the sick endears them to us,
us too it endears.
— Gerard Manley Hopkins

The author of Psalm 71 begs the Lord, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails me." And in the Decalogue we hear this precept of the Lord: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Both the ancient prayer and the ancient command have been given a modern edge of urgency by the current increase in our life expectancy and the special illnesses that age brings with it. Among the most challenging of these illnesses is dementia.

A conservative estimate is that at least 30 percent of people over age eighty-five have Alzheimer's disease, the major cause of the dementia syndrome. The leading symptoms of dementia are, frankly, terrifying: loss of memory, of language, and of reasoning ability. We all feel at least a slight anxiety about dementia because these dreaded symptoms seem to assault our very identities, to dissolve the autobiographical narratives that constitute the very story of our lives. But are there hints of a deeper purpose underlying the universe even in the deep forgetfulness of dementia, hints for both those afflicted and those who care for them?

One lesson, for me, is that people with dementia remind us that we are all deficient in spiritual memory, that we are largely forgetful of the Creative Presence that set up a universe to give rise to creatures like ourselves. Religion is in large part an effort at memory enhancement through speech, symbol, and ritual. The Prophets were sent to *remind* Israel of its covenants with the Lord; Christians celebrate the Eucharist with the words of Jesus, "Do this in *remembrance* of me" (Luke 22:19). The Book of Common Prayer contains these eloquent words: "Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being; we do humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your holy spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we might *not forget you, but remember* that we are always walking in your sight."

St. Augustine is the great theologian of memory. His awe at human memory is clear in the tenth book of his *Confessions*: "All this goes on inside me, in the vast cloisters of my memory. In it are the sky, the earth, and the sea, ready at my summons, together with everything that I have ever perceived in them by my senses, except the things which I have forgotten. In it I meet myself as well. I remember myself and what I have done, when and where I did it, and the state of my mind at the time."

Augustine saw memory as an aid to our salvation. Despite all our false pursuits of happiness in possessions or accomplishments, our hearts remain restless, seeking true happiness in God, and to aid that search there is within us a "still faint glow of light" that is nothing other than a memory, however dim, of a blessed state of true happiness that preceded the fall.

Those whom severe dementia has made deeply forgetful do forget much that is crucial to life as ordinarily lived: they may even forget those who love them most, and this is terribly painful to the forgotten ones. Yet they may have fleeting moments of a "still faint glow of light" when they recall vague traces of those who love them. We, who love them and are forgotten, may have by analogy some deeper apprehension of the life of the loving but unremembered God who, if religious thinkers such as Abraham Heschel or the "process" theologians are correct, calls out to each one of us, "Forget me not."

Observers estimate, and my personal experience confirms, that 90 percent of Americans who are diagnosed with dementia pray. They are, it seems, thrown back onto whatever faith they have in the loving and beneficent purposes underlying the universe. They are shaken existentially, and many begin this final phase of their lives with a profound recovery of spirituality.

I think of Peter, a member of a focus group in a project about coping with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's, who said, "Oh, I was devastated that I lost the technical ability to do my job and the sense of pride that comes into play. And I think pride sometimes is an evil factor because it weighs on your mind and it tells you that you are worthless and it kind of destroys your self-worth." Peter goes to his Roman Catholic church every Sunday, and every day he reads from a prayer book:

> It's a daily prayer book and each day of the week it has a prayer. And every morning when I wake up I read the prayer for that particular day. And, like I say, before when I was working, I would never read anything like this. You know, it was the farthest thing from my mind. But now every morning I read it faithfully. Monday's prayer I happen to like most because it kind of applies to us here. Happy disease? It says my Lord God, I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. I know that you will lead me by the right road, though I might know noth-

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> ing about it. Therefore, I trust you always. I will not fear. For you are with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. And this gives me a sense of reassurance.

There were no such prayers prior to Peter's diagnosis. Indeed, his dementia has been accompanied by something like a spiritual conversion:

> I'd say, why did you let this happen to me? I had such a good career. Everything was going fine for me. He would say to me probably, "Well, why did you fight it? I was trying to lead you in this direction." Oh, I didn't realize that. Well, I've come to the conclusion that everything has a purpose, so the Good Lord, He knows the best for you. So maybe this was to slow me down to enjoy life and to enjoy my family and to enjoy what's out there. And right now, I can say that I'm a better person for it, in appreciation of other people's needs and illnesses, than I ever was when I was working that rat race back and forth day to day.

Though dementia may seem to be an attack on the self, it has brought to Peter an unsought and unexpected discovery of self.

For many who are, like Peter, in the course of progressive dementia, litanies, prayers, and hymns often have a deep emotional significance. Perhaps more contemplative and spiritual capacities are elevated as the capacity for technical, instrumental rationality fades. It is evident that people continue to benefit from rituals that connect them with their spirituality. It is my belief that divine love never abandons the deeply forgetful, which is to say that it never abandons anyone and is therefore truly unlimited.

I recall an old Catholic man with advanced dementia who could not speak unless a rosary was placed in his hand and someone started to recite the words of the Hail Mary. Then, surprisingly, he would go through the entire rosary on his own, saying each prayer in order. The fragmentation of selfhood resulting from the deterioration of the mind requires spiritual mending. Is it possible that people with dementia might be spiritually enriched, even as they dwell within the depths of despair?

The Lord has purposes in the domain of dementia, however mysterious these might be. And these extend to caregivers, who in remarkable moral creativity work unselfishly with the remaining capacities of the deeply forgetful. Their love provides a kind of grace, and is itself often sustained by faith in a higher purpose. Caregivers can learn, in their difficult work, that persons with dementia are not so different from the rest of us: they need to be loved, to feel good about themselves, to be respected, to be stimulated emotionally and relationally, to feel secure, to be included in activities, and to find moments of delight in the abundance of natural beauty.

A caregiver's immersion in what we might call the culture of dementia can bring to light the complicated emotional and relational experiences of those afflicted. There is the assertion of will or desire, usually in the form of dissent. There is the ability to express a range of emotions, including positive ones. There is initiation of social contact (for instance, a person with dementia has a small toy dog that he treasures and places before another person). There is affectional warmth—for instance, a woman wanders back and forth in her facility without much socializing, but when people say hello to her she gives them a kiss on the cheek and continues her wandering. There is a remarkable appreciation for pet dogs and plants, which has resulted in sections of many nursing homes implementing the so-called "Eden Alternative" of a naturalistic environment with friendly animals.

Individual memory and rationality may fail, but quality of life in community remains a moral and practical goal. Just as a lost limb can be replaced, to some degree, by a prosthesis, so the loving care of family, nursing home, and church can become prosthetics for the loss of fluency of tongue and mind.

But as more and more of us find ourselves called upon to provide such prosthetic support to afflicted parents, relatives, or friends, we may find it a challenge to remember that such patients are never less than persons. There is in most of us a spark of reason, and much was achieved for universal human moral standing by the great Stoic philosophers who emphasized this *logos* in us all. Yet their insight may lead us to arrogance, if we make the worth of a human being entirely dependent on rationality. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, "Since the divine principle is reason, the logic of Stoicism tends to include only the intelligent in the divine community. An aristocratic condescension, therefore, corrupts Stoic universalism." Equal regard under the love of God, coupled with the remaining emotional, relational, and symbolic-expressive aspects of persons with advanced dementia, leads us to reject the rationalistic outlook captured in the expression "I think, therefore I am." In its place a less arrogant conception is possible: "I feel and relate, and under God, I am."

People with cognitive disabilities need the sense of safety and peace that love creates; care for them must therefore provide loving attention, which reveals their value to themselves. We must set aside the distorted position that a person's worth, dignity, and sta-

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tus as a human being depend entirely on cognitive capability. We must develop a view of personhood that takes into account the emotional, relational, symbolic, and even spiritual capacities of the person. We live in a culture that is dominated by heightened expectations of rationalism, clarity of mind, and productivity. We internalize these expectations; thus when someone we love is diagnosed with early dementia, our reaction is likely to be despair. Our goal, however, must be to remember that the deeply forgetful are neither "shells" nor "husks"; they have not become subhuman; they remain part of our shared humanity. About this we must be clear, lest we succumb to the banality of evil.

And there can be evil. Dementia is an affront to our values of hypercognition and economic productivity. Why tolerate "useless eaters" and "life unworthy of life"? In Berlin in 1939 the T-4 Project began under the direction of Werner Hyde, a professor of psychiatry. In T-4 an estimated 94,000 psychiatric patients (all of them "Aryan" and roughly half of them with dementia) were suffocated in gas chambers or left to freeze in vats of ice water as part of a research project on hypothermia. Public outcry in Germany put an end to T-4 in 1941, but the methods were transferred to Dachau and Auschwitz, where the authorities applied them to other so-called inferiors. We must never forget that the true authority, that of the kingdom of heaven, classifies no one as "inferior."

A woman I know wrote me the following note after her father had passed away from Alzheimer's:

> Looking back over the years, we feel we did some things well, some things not so well. We realize times were often difficult. However, there were good times too, seeing his face light up when we walked into the room, seeing his smile, watching him laugh, seeing him enjoying music or some other activity, receiving those big hugs, watching him sleep so peacefully after hours of restlessness, hearing him say 'I love you too!' or when he was no longer able to speak seeing the love in his eyes as he squeezed your hand so tightly! Yes, these and other memories are cherished. We're so thankful we were able to help him during his journey. All who knew him will remember his wonderful smile and Christian integrity. We've been told by many how he positively touched their lives in spite of, and even during his illness. We're convinced an Alzheimer's patient feels and yes, even comprehends, far more than we realize. Personally, we feel they never lose their need to be loved.

How in practice can we transmit to them our love and the love of God? As caregivers, we should talk even to the most cognitively disabled, calling them by name and expecting a response (which, sometimes surprisingly, may come). We should speak with a warm and calm voice, with a joyful facial expression, bending down to make eye contact, communicating with them rather than around them. We can use pictures, music, hymns, Scripture, poetry, meaningful symbols, and short simple prayers. Above all, we can affirm the existence of the deeply forgetful, no matter how diminished that existence may seem. We are not obliged to reorient them into our reality, but we are obliged to be an attentive presence in theirs. Why? Because we remember not only the Psalm about aging and the commandment about parents, but also the words of Jesus about the infinite value of small acts of kindness: "Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

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St. Benedict After September 11

John M. Owen IV

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre closed his 1981 book *After Virtue* by posing what might be called the St. Benedict option. As a society, we retain the vestiges of traditional moral language but not the communities and practices that produced that language. Moreover, our elites think that justice has no grounding apart from individual feelings. The Enlightenment project of replacing tradition with self-grounding moral rules has failed, and no grand replacement has emerged. According to MacIntyre, such a society is "not waiting for Godot, but for another—and doubtless very different—St. Benedict."

To conservative American Christians—evangelical Protestants and orthodox Catholics—MacIntyre's diagnosis sounded right. Christendom, the *res publica Christiana* inaugurated by the Emperor Constantine

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and (so it had been thought) carried on by the American Founders, appeared dead, and what had replaced it was not clear: perhaps a centerless web of individuals; perhaps a welter of groups holding incommensurate values; perhaps an aggressive secular empire. Conservative Christians saw that they had been routed from the commanding heights of culture, including the media, the academy, the state, and in particular the courts.

Whatever MacIntyre's intent, his line about St. Benedict was often taken to mean that people adhering to traditional moral norms should withdraw to some extent from the corrupting influences of American society and into their particular communities. This communal turn was reflected in many of the books conservative Christians read in the 1980s and '90s. Lesslie Newbigin's work counseled them to abandon the old propositional apologetics and instead to evangelize through living as the Christian community, for "Jesus did not write a book but formed a community." Quasi-Anabaptist writers such as Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, for whom Constantinianism had been a colossal error all along, told a newly receptive audience that they had been making the correlative mistake of thinking of themselves as Americans before Christians. Thus Hauerwas, writing in 1992: "To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices." At the same time, the localism of Wendell Berry and the Southern Agrarians became plausible for many.

Christian social practices changed accordingly, most strikingly in the rise of home schooling. Many also expressed a desire to stop watching television, even if they found it difficult to do so. Paul Weyrich declared in 1999 that Christians had lost the culture wars: "We need to drop out of this culture, and find places, even if it is where we physically are right now, where we can live godly, righteous, and sober lives."

Christians were not alone in turning from the general to the particular. In the academy, so-called perspectivalism took root, as postmodern theorists denied the possibility of a "metanarrative," a master interpretation of the world such as the ones claimed by modern science or revealed religion. In political theory, communitarians faulted liberalism for its assumption—long uncontroversial in America—that people were at bottom individuals rather than members of communities. On a popular level, Americans began emphasizing their ethnicity in ways that would have baffled their grandparents. Whereas in 1900 most European-Americans strove to fit under the mythical, ethnicity-free American umbrella, in 2000 many were desperate to discover or invent for themselves some colorful ethnic heritage. Just about everyone outside the natural sciences and analytic philosophy turned with ferocity on the Enlightenment for its claim to have discovered rational foundations of knowledge: what one "knew" was now said to be chiefly a function of one's race, class, or gender.

Conservative Christians did not abandon what they understood to be the Founders' idea of America, a nation designed above all to protect liberty so as to allow the flourishing of Christianity. In principle they remained the most patriotic of Americans. But they did begin to turn away from the America as it was, with its high rates of abortion, divorce, and illegitimacy; its courts and public schools that seemed bent on extirpating religion and undermining traditional morality; its debased popular culture; and, in the late 1990s, its widespread indifference to the degeneracy of its President. Whereas post–World War II Christians had identified with America because of its liberty and self-government, post–Cold War Christians were prone to distance themselves from it for its depravities. Some thoughtful Christians also began to distance themselves from some of its institutions, particularly capitalism. What Berry, Hauerwas, and others had long been saying began to make sense to more Christians—that America's free market and pursuit of ever-greater prosperity were not biblically authorized and might actually undermine community by encouraging people's basest appetites.

It is clear that the deepening secularization of society just described bore some responsibility for American Christians' disenchantment. Yet an additional cause is plausible as well: America's lack of a serious foreign enemy. A well-developed body of social theory holds that group cohesion varies directly with external threat. Georg Simmel, Lewis Coser, and others long ago noted that a group that is externally threatened will typically exhibit more solidarity than a group that is externally secure.

American Christians are, by definition, members of two important social groups: the United States and the Church. Like all members of multiple groups, their identity and way of life fuses norms promoted by these as well as other groups; they are adept at discovering ways to harmonize their group affiliations. But at a given moment they will identify most strongly with the group most threatened. In the 1950s and '60s the Communist menace was most dire, and America, the chief bulwark against communism, was the most salient group. In the 1980s and '90s the threats of secularism and moral relativism began to

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dominate just as the threat from communism diminished, and so the conservative churches became more salient than the nation.

But this changed again on September 11, 2001, when America suddenly found itself again facing a serious foreign enemy. Islamist terrorism, of course, threatened all Americans, not just orthodox Catholics and Evangelicals. So conservative Christians in large numbers, like most Americans, suddenly began identifying more strongly with their country—not just with that historic Christian America that they remembered or imagined, but with the America they actually had. As in the Cold War, they were determined to defend not only their nation's borders, property, and people, but also its institutions and way of life. Complaints about decadence and secular imperialism were quickly supplanted by once-familiar assertions about liberty and democracy.

Only things were not so simple. Social theorists also note that sometimes an external threat can aggravate divisions within a social group, as one side makes common cause with the foreign enemy against the domestic one. Some conservative Christians and some of their secular opponents immediately engaged in this sort of polemic, recruiting September 11 to fight the domestic culture wars. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson agreed that it was at least possible that God allowed the slaughter of 3,000 people as a demonstration of His wrath against apostate America. Some secularists retorted that September 11 proved that politics must be entirely free of religion—as if Falwell and Robertson might have hijacked the jets if only they had thought of it first. Each side accused the other of being a sort of Fifth Column, thereby dividing the country and making a unified response to terrorism more difficult.

In the ensuing months, a minority of orthodox Christians have refused to allow September 11 to dissuade them from their more communal visions of America. Right-wing writers such as Joseph Sobran and left-wing writers such as Stanley Hauerwas and Wendell Berry agree not only that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were dead wrong, but more broadly that the America we have—an empire determined to remake the world in its image—provokes terrorism and makes the world generally more dangerous. These ideas have their difficulties, as Jean Bethke Elshtain has made clear, but at least their propagators can claim consistency across time: their message was the same a decade ago.

Not so for most of the rest of us. Most Evangelical and orthodox Catholic Americans find ourselves loyal not only to what ought to be our most important spiritual community, the Church, but also to the community that God uses to keep us secure, prosperous, and free to worship Him—namely our country. We know that we must defend our homeland and sense that that defense must involve some degree of affirmation of American culture and institutions. If one's country is wicked enough, if its institutions and practices are evil, as in the perennial limiting case of Nazi Germany, one should pray for its defeat in war. America is not nearly so wicked as that. It continues to be good to us and to the Church more generally, not just by shielding us from foreign threats but by allowing Christian life, and life in general, to flourish as it rarely has in history. The Islamists are wrong to regard the United States and the West more generally as thoroughly corrupt and worthy only of destruction.

But the Islamists are right that our society is ailing. Many of their complaints about America—that it produces selfish, decadent, impious people, weak families, and corrupt religious communities, not only at home but increasingly abroad through its cultural exports—are also our complaints as Christians. Hence our dilemma, for many of those who join us in defending America against Islamist terrorism have in mind a different America. Their America is the one from which we had begun to recoil and withdraw—until September 11.

Our task, then, is to defend two things simultaneously: the America we have and the Church to which we belong. Fighting for the first may tempt us to set aside the defense of the second for the sake of national unity; defending the second may compromise our battle for the first by weakening that unity. No clear solution to our dilemma exists. What we *can* do is remind ourselves and one another that we do face a dilemma and must not rush to grasp either horn: we must neither identify America with the Kingdom of God and thereby confirm the Islamists' accusations nor leave our decadent nation to defend itself without our help. Beyond that, we must make clear to ourselves, our secular fellow citizens, the Islamists, and the wider world what it is about America that continues to hold our loyalty as Christians. Unless we were wrong in the 1980s and '90s, it cannot *simply* be individual liberty. It must also include America's continuing toleration of institutions that mediate between the individual and the state, institutions such as the Church itself.

September 11 has clarified matters. Though American society may deploy many corrupting influences against the Church and its members, the American state, by the grace of God, mostly continues to allow the Church to do its thing. The state, being the supreme coercive power in any country, is capable in

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theory of forcing the Church (and other communities) to change their practices or suffer punishment. America's religious toleration is a reason why America not only deserves our loyalty, but also merits our continuing involvement. In a democracy the state is in principle responsible to the society it governs. Were Christians to cease being Americans in any meaningful sense, to withdraw completely from society, the state would be less responsible to us, and maybe less hospitable. God may use state persecution to purify His Church, but it is a perverse and unbiblical ethics that teaches that the Church should try to force God's hand by enabling the state to become more oppressive.

In the end, the same trends that prod us to look for another St. Benedict require that we not follow him all the way into the cloisters, at least for now. Our love for the Church, our families, and other communities demands our continuing engagement in, and defense of, the America we have.

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Holy Thursday

Tonight I ask You in to help me mourn.
  You who help whom you please,
  don't leave me just with these—
a loincloth, timber, nail, and scarlet thorn.

I'm what I earn to think, not think I am.
  Nor love, wisdom, or art
  sustains the baffled heart,
and fact contains no holy anagram.

Be more, Lord, than my hope, Your innocence.
  Reason has never known
  how to live with its own
immaculate, hard-hearted arguments.

Moore Moran

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The End of the Pius Wars

Joseph Bottum

The Pius War is over, more or less. There will still be a few additional volumes published here and there, another article or two from writers too slow off the mark to catch their moment. But, basically, in the great argument that has raged over the last few years about the role of Pope Pius XII during World War II, the books have all been written, the reviews are all in, and the exchanges have all simmered down. It was a long and arduous struggle, vituperative and cruel, but, in the end, the defenders of Pius XII won every major battle. Along the way, they also lost the war.

Who, even among scholars in the field, could keep up with the flood of attacks on Pius XII that began in the late 1990s? John Cornwell gave us *Hitler's Pope*, and Michael Phayer followed with *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust*. David Kertzer brought charges against Pius XII in *The Popes Against the Jews*, and Susan Zuccotti reversed her previous scholarship to pen *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. Garry Wills used Pius as the centerpiece for his reformist *Papal Sin*, as did James Carroll in *Constantine's Sword*. So, for that matter, did Daniel Goldhagen when he wrote what proved to be the most extended and straightforward assault on Catholicism in decades: *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*.

Meanwhile, the essays and occasional pieces were collected in such volumes as *Holocaust Scholars Write to the Vatican*, and *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, and *The Vatican and the Holocaust*, and *Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust*, and *Christian Responses to the Holocaust*—and on, and on, until we seemed to be facing what the exasperated reviewer John Pawlikowski called "a virtual book-of-the-month club on institutional Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust."

The champions of Pius had their share of book-length innings as well—although, one might note, never from the same level of popular publisher as the attackers managed to find. In 1999 Pierre Blet produced *Pius XII and the Second World War According to the Archives of the Vatican* and got Paulist Press, a respectable but small Catholic house, to publish it in America. Ronald Rychlak finished his first-rate *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*, and the hardback was brought out by a press in Columbia, Missouri, known mostly for printing romance novels. For the paperback edition, Rychlak's work was picked up by the book-publishing arm of the Catholic newspaper *Our Sunday Visitor*.

Those are both fine presses in their way, and Rychlak has done well for them. But one can reasonably point out that *Our Sunday Visitor* is not quite at the level of distribution, advertising, and influence enjoyed by Doubleday, Houghton Mifflin, Knopf, and Viking—the large houses that issued the books against Pius. The commentator Philip Jenkins recently suggested that this disparity in publishers sends a message that the mainstream view is the guilt of Pius XII, while praise for the Pope belongs only to the cranks, nuts, and sectarians.

Jenkins' suggestion is worth considering. Still, no one can say Pius' supporters were squashed or censored. In just six years, Margherita Marchione man-

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aged five books in praise of the Pope. The Thomistic philosopher and novelist Ralph McInerny, aggravated by the deluge of attacks, issued a splenetic volume called *The Defamation of Pope Pius XII*, while Justus George Lawler (a writer best known in Catholic circles for his liberalism) penned a witty evisceration of Pius' critics called *Popes and Politics: Reform, Resentment, and the Holocaust*. José Sánchez added *Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust*, and a slew of German and Italian books might be mentioned as well, prompted, for the most part, by the popular visibility of the English-language criticisms even in Europe.

But it was primarily in book reviews and responses that the defenders of Pius XII fought out the war—which is something of a problem. Every pope precipitates biographies, hagiographies, and maledictions, like the dropping of the rain; it is part of the job to be much written about, and the works on Eugenio Pacelli that began to appear when he became pope in 1939 seem innumerable. But no supporter has yet produced a book-length biography in the wake of the recent years of extended blame. Even Rychlak's *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* was essentially reactive, devoting a thirty-page epilogue to a catalogue of the errors in Cornwell's book.

We have seen this pattern before. Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy* premiered in Berlin in 1963, and its picture of a greedy pope, concerned only about Vatican finances and silent about the Holocaust, immediately caused a firestorm of comment from the intellectual world. Everyone who was anyone felt compelled to weigh in.

Hochhuth himself faded away when he tried to extend his censure to Winston Churchill, penning a play in 1967 that claimed Churchill had ordered the murder of the Polish General Wladyslaw Sikorski and, later, the murder of the pilot who had crashed Sikorski's plane. Unbeknownst to Hochhuth, the pilot was, in fact, still alive, and he won a libel judgment that badly damaged the London theater which had staged the play. Thereafter, Hochhuth found it harder to get a hearing—although, interestingly, the current notoriety of Pius XII seems to have resurrected the playwright to some degree, and in 2002 the Greek filmmaker Constantin Costa-Gravas released a movie version of *The Deputy* with the English title *Amen* (or *Eyewitness*, in other copies).

Even without Hochhuth, the wide discussion about Pius XII he initiated in 1963 went on for several years. It produced some overheated journalistic attempts to cash in on the public interest, such as Robert Katz' *Black Sabbath* and *Death in Rome* (the latter being the target of a successful libel suit, this time brought by Pius XII's niece, Countess Elena Pacelli Rossignani). But the era brought forth as well three more serious and scholarly—indeed, by today's standards, quite moderate and thoughtful—attacks: Guenter Lewy's *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (1964), Carlo Falconi's *The Silence of Pius XII* (1965), and Saul Friedlander's *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation* (1966).

The brouhaha also prompted the Vatican to begin releasing material from Pius' pontificate, which appeared from 1965 to 1981 as the eleven-volume series *Actes et Documents*. In part by relying on these new documents, but even more by simply gathering their forces and investigating each of the incidents taken as the core of the indictment, the defenders gradually tamped down *The Deputy*'s claims about Pius XII and the Holocaust. Pope John Paul II was a consistent advocate for his predecessor, and even once-popular notions about Pius—that he was, for instance, the great reactionary opponent against whom Vatican II turned—gradually seemed to lose steam by the late 1970s and early '80s. It took more than a decade, but the reactive reviewers appeared to carry the day, and the popular magazine press and major book publishers lost interest.

A few commentators noted that the whole thing hadn't entirely died. The historian Michael Tagliacozzo said he kept an open file labeled "Calumnies Against Pius XII." But most were unprepared when the criticism began again in the late 1990s. To journalists and cultural commentators, *Hitler's Pope* seemed almost to come out of nowhere in 1999, and it received almost entirely ecstatic reviews when it first appeared. A few skeptical journalists who remembered the Hochhuth battles—*Newsweek*'s Kenneth Woodward and the *New York Times*' Peter Steinfels, notably—doubted Cornwell's conclusions, but it had been years since they had investigated the topic, and they were unprepared to provide details about the book's errors.

Time was needed for scholars to gin up the machine again, double-check the claims in *Hitler's Pope*, and publish the reviews. Some of the results proved deeply embarrassing for Cornwell, particularly the falsity of his boast that he had spent "months on end" in the archives, when he visited the Vatican for only three weeks and didn't go to the archives every day of that. The Italian letter from Pacelli that Cornwell placed at the center of his book as evidence of deep anti-Semitism had been, he claimed, waiting secretly "like a time bomb" until he did his research. In fact, it had been published in 1992 in a book by Emma Fattorini, who—an actual Italian, not working on a par-

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tisan translation—thought it meant very little. By the time all this came out, however, *Hitler's Pope* had ridden out its time on the best-seller list.

Pius' supporters were better prepared for Susan Zuccotti, and still better prepared for Garry Wills, and David Kertzer, and James Carroll, and, particularly, Daniel Goldhagen, who was especially harried in late 2002. By then, the whole thing had turned into a giant game of "Whack the Mole," with dozens of reviewers ready to smash their mallets down on the next author to stick up his head. Poor Peter Godman, for instance, has recently written *Hitler and the Vatican: Inside the Secret Archives that Reveal the New Story of the Nazis and the Church*; before the book was even out of galleys, the scholars had ready a list of Godman's factual errors, missed documents, and wrongheaded translations.

As it happens, Godman appears not to have done a terrible job with *Hitler and the Vatican*. Despite its tendentious opening—how could the Vatican "not raise its voice against the cruelties of racism, the brutality of totalitarianism [and] the repression of liberties in the Third Reich?" Godman asks, although his own book goes on to prove the Vatican to some degree did exactly that—*Hitler and the Vatican* seems, on the whole, slightly more a defense than an assault, blaming mostly the Austrian bishop Alois Hudal for what other authors have charged against Eugenio Pacelli while he was nuncio in Germany and secretary of state in Rome. Just as *The Deputy* moved the archivists in Rome to release *Actes et Documents* over the next sixteen years, so the current Pius War has prompted an accelerated—by glacial Vatican norms—opening of a few new archives from the pontificate of Pius XI (1922-1939), whom Pacelli served as the Vatican's secretary of state. Along with an Italian Jesuit named Giovanni Sale (who has been writing a torrent of articles for the Roman Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*), Godman is among the first scholars to have used the new documents. And although he looked at only a handful—the title of his book is considerably overblown—he seems to have done so in a relatively reasonable and balanced way, particularly given the standard set by Cornwell and Goldhagen.

Unfortunately, you would never guess it from the publicity material his publisher, Free Press, issued to reviewers. Godman is carefully identified as "an atheist," lest anyone think he has a personal stake in exonerating Catholicism—but the press release begins by denying that he is, in fact, doing anything other than denouncing the Church. "Finally," it opens (and, oh, that telling, breathless "finally": *Yes, finally!*), "the full story of the Catholic Church and its connection to the Nazis can be told—thanks to the historic opening of the Vatican's most secret and controversial archives. Ever since 1542, the Catholic Church's secretive office known as the Roman Inquisition has been its most feared, and one of its most powerful as the organization responsible for all matters concerning Catholic faith and morals. It was this committee of cardinals that was charged with formulating church policy toward the Nazis in the 1930s. Records of the Inquisition concerning the Nazis have been kept at the highest grade of papal secrecy, breach of which entails excommunication, until now."

Until now, you understand. *Until now!* It would be funny—in fact, it is funny, although one feels a little guilty quoting a publisher's press release against an author, just as one tries not to blame professors for the notes their students take in class—but the publicists at Free Press are not responding to nothing. They're trying to sell a book, and they have correctly grasped the public consensus that has been formed over the last few years.

There was a curious moment during the exchanges about *A Moral Reckoning* in which Daniel Goldhagen appeared to admit that he had gotten the details wrong, but the point remained untouched. At one level, that makes no sense: He was writing an argumentative essay, after all, and if his evidence fails, so must his conclusion. But at another level, it makes perfect sense. However successfully the reviewers refuted the Pope's detractors, the sum of all those well-publicized attacks, from Cornwell on, has had a tremendous impact on what people think—the tropes they use, the pictures they form, the things journalists think they can get away with saying, the images pundits believe will prove useful when they wish to strafe a particular target.

In the public mind at the present moment, there's almost nothing bad you can't say about Pius XII. The Vatican may end up declaring him a saint—the slow process of canonization has been winding its way through the Roman curia since the mid-1960s—but the general public has gradually been persuaded that Pius ranks somewhere among the greatest villains ever to walk the earth. Nearly every crime of the twentieth century seems to be laid at this man's feet. Disapprove of the war in Vietnam? Well, according to a Ft. Lauderdale newspaper, Pius XII was "the main inspirer and prosecutor" of that war. Hate racism? An article in 2002 painted him as a slavering racist who mocked the Moroccan soldiers fighting for the Free French. Another had the young Pacelli denouncing black American soldiers for "routinely raping German women and children" after World War I.

Worse, he signed for the Vatican a hitherto-

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unknown "secret pact" with Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The Catholic hierarchy has suppressed all copies, so nobody knows what it said, but it must have been bad—although it scarcely seems necessary, since (a French author assured us in 1996) the Vatican and Germany began secretly working together all the way back in 1914 to bring about a German domination of Europe. Perhaps it doesn't matter that this contradicts other theories floating around these days: that Pius XII was secretly working with Mussolini to achieve an Italian domination of Europe, for instance, or that he was secretly plotting with hard-line anti-Soviets to make the Protestant United States and Great Britain the world's great powers. The point is that there is simply no depravity one can put past the man. He suppressed the anti-Nazi encyclical that Pius XI on his deathbed begged him to release. He was deeply implicated in the German's massacre of 335 Italians in the Ardeatine Caves. He expressly permitted, even encouraged, the S.S. to round up Rome's Jews in 1943.

At the root of all this lies the fact that Pius XII was, fundamentally, a follower of Hitler, a genocidal hater of the Jews in his heart and in his mind, and once we recognize him as a Nazi who somehow escaped punishment at the Nuremberg trials, we can see the origin of all the rest. He was *Hitler's Pope*, in the title of John Cornwell's book. The Holocaust happened *Under His Very Windows*, in the title of Susan Zuccotti's. Pius XII represents the highest pitch of *Papal Sin*, in Garry Wills' title. The modern era is defined by *The Popes Against the Jews*, in David Kertzer's—and just so nobody misses the point, the drawing on Kertzer's dust jacket features a Nazi with whip and a Catholic priest standing on the body of a Holocaust victim.

Meanwhile, the *Times* of London named him "a war criminal" in 1999. The next year the television program *60 Minutes* insisted there was "absolutely" no difference between the writings of Pius and the writings of Hitler. Daniel Goldhagen called him a "Nazi collaborator" who "tacitly and sometimes materially aided in mass murder"—which was relatively mild compared to Goldhagen's other description of the Pope as a willing servant of "the closest human analogue to the Antichrist" and a man whose Church's two-thousand-year history is nothing but preparation for the Holocaust's slaughter of the Jews.

Forget the often-denounced "silence of Pius XII" about the Holocaust. Pacelli didn't just accept Hitler; he *loved* the Nazi leader and agreed with him about everything. Did you know that shortly after World War I he gave the starving Adolf Hitler money because he so much approved the young man's ideas? (This, by the way, is from a book that also reveals how Pius XII was merely the puppet of his Vatican housekeeper, Sister Pascalina.) Perhaps avarice to increase Vatican finances is what made him force reluctant Swiss banks to confiscate Jewish accounts. But only enduring belief in Nazi ideas can explain why Pius was the chief funder and organizer of the Ratline that helped hunted Gestapo agents escape to South America after Hitler's defeat.

Regardless, the Pope was manifestly an anti-Semite of the first water—John Cornwell declared his views "of the kind that Julius Streicher would soon offer the German public in every issue of his notorious Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*"—except when Pius is said to have merely allowed Hitler free rein, accepting the murder of the Jews as the price to be paid for getting Germany to war against the greater menace of the godless Communists in Soviet Russia. These notions are not necessarily contradictory. In a 1997 essay, the widely published Richard L. Rubenstein concluded: "during World War II Pope Pius XII and the vast majority of European Christian leaders regarded the elimination of the Jews as no less beneficial than the destruction of Bolshevism."

All of these claims are mistaken, of course—and more than mistaken: demonstrably and obviously untrue, outrages upon history and fellow feeling for the humanity of previous generations. But none of them are merely the lurid fantasies of conspiracy-mongers huddled together in paranoia on their Internet lists. Every one of these assertions has been made in recent years by books and articles published with mainstream and popular American publishers.

And when we draw from them their general conclusion—when we reach the point at which Rubenstein, for example, has arrived—then discourse is over. Research into primary sources, argument about interpretation, the scholar's task of weighing historical circumstances: All of this is *quibbling*, an attempt to be fair to monstrosity, and by such fairness to condone, excuse, and participate in it. After printing the opening salvo of Goldhagen's offensive against Catholicism, the publisher of the *New Republic* announced that Pius XII was, simply and purely, "a wicked man." And once one has said that, one has said all that needs to be known.

It was here that the Pius War was lost—and lost for what I believe will be at least a generation—despite the victories of the reviewers. The question of "why now?" is an interesting one. Philip Jenkins understands it as not particular to Pius XII at all, but merely a convenient trope by which American commenta-

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tors express what he calls an entirely new form of anti-Catholicism. Others see it in a continuum of more old-fashioned American distaste for the Whore of Babylon that dwells in Rome, spinning Jesuitical plots. Ralph McInerny linked it darkly to contemporary hatred of the Church's stand against abortion. Noting the predominance of a certain sort of Catholic author in these debates, Justus George Lawler suggested the root lay in a "papaphobia" that has turned against the entire idea of authority. David Dalin argued that it was finally about John Paul II: an intra-Catholic fight over the future of the papacy, with the Holocaust merely the biggest club around for opponents of the current pope to use against his supporters.

All of these are quite interesting. None are quite persuasive. What the real cause may be, I cannot decide for myself. But it is into a world of public and scholarly opinion formed by books like *Hitler's Pope* that every new attempt to consider the issue must enter. Relatively mild efforts to praise the Pope (such as José Sánchez's *Pius XII and the Holocaust* in 2002), like relatively mild criticism (such as Martin Rhonheimer's November 2003 essay in First Things), are as clueless about the situation in which they appear as the proverbial visitors from Mars. Indeed, there is something willful and maddening in their tone of Olympian detachment. In a world of imbalance, what but pressure on the other side can restore the balance that a true scholar is supposed to love? I am convinced that we will not achieve anything resembling historical accuracy until all present views have been cleared away—and thus, that the job for every honest writer who takes up the topic now is to correct the slander of Pius XII.

I did not always think so. A minor member of the chattering classes, I entered the Pius War in 2000 with an essay that was far from an exoneration of the Pope. Attempting to strike a balance (the voice of sweet reason and evenhandedness is always easier for a writer to cobble up than the reality), I suggested in an article for *Crisis* magazine that perhaps no one could have been expected to do better than Pius XII, but, even so, what he did was not enough when faced with World War II and the Holocaust.

And there I left it. Although the continued flow of books attacking the Pope began to annoy me, they even more began to bore me, and I refused to commission a review of any of them for the *Weekly Standard*, the magazine at which I work. But one day, I bumped into the historian and rabbi David Dalin on the street in Washington, D.C. Over coffee, he mentioned that he had been reading John Cornwell and Susan Zuccotti, and although it wasn't precisely his field—and, anyway, he'd never thought particularly well of Pius XII—there was something about these books he didn't trust: some manifest desire to find guilt whether it was there or not, some adventitious and hungry tone that put his teeth on edge.

And at that point, there on M Street, I had an idea. It occurred to me that if a scholarly American reader like David Dalin was feeling this way, then probably others were beginning to as well. A neoconservative and center-right publication, the *Weekly Standard* is widely read by the pundit class in New York and Washington, and so I commissioned David to write an omnibus review of the enormous set of new books on Pius. What weekly magazine editors want, more than anything else, is to get out just enough ahead of opinion that it looks as though they're leading the parade, giving first expression to an idea inchoate but building among readers. Moreover, I imagined the vast majority of neoconservative commentators—together with neoliberal and center-left, for that matter—would nod in agreement when the review appeared.

Events proved me wrong. More prescient than I in understanding where the debate was actually going, David Dalin grew more furious the more he read in the popular books. Eventually he turned in an essay that went far beyond any claim I had been willing to make. Published in February 2001, it concluded that Pius XII deserves recognition among Jews as a Righteous Gentile who saved hundreds of thousands of lives during the Holocaust.

The reaction, in the arena I had hoped to influence, was brutal, and the *Weekly Standard* found itself leading the parade only in the sense that a man running for his life leads the mob pursuing him. Judith Shulevitz of the *New York Times* responded in the way I had supposed most would, writing a piece for the *New York Times Book Review* that grumbled a little but eventually concluded the claims about Pius XII were overwrought and Dalin was basically right: the Pope did "more than most to shelter Jews."

But the center-left *New Republic* immediately commissioned Daniel Goldhagen to interrupt the book he was writing and savage Pius XII instead—which he did in what is said to be the longest essay ever published in the magazine's pages. The neoconservative *Commentary* was so rankled that it did what it would not have done in nearly any other circumstance: it published a long rebuke of the *Weekly Standard* by a leftist author who had already made many of the same complaints in an article for *Christian Century*. At a Holocaust symposium the next summer, one conservative editor declared he would never

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read another word David Dalin wrote—because Pius XII was beyond apology. Curiously, this was the same editor who had told me the year before that my own nuanced defense of the Pope in *Crisis* seemed exactly the right way to understand the topic. But the momentum of the continuing offensive against Pius was stronger than I had guessed, and in my own journalistic world, David Dalin's essay served mostly to harden opinion toward exactly the opposite of what I had intended.

In a handful of other worlds—particularly conservative Catholic ones—the essay did quite well. But those were the worlds that hardly needed it. For people of that persuasion, the omnipresent assault on Pius XII drives them toward the worst possibilities for their communities: a dread that rampant anti-Catholicism is shortly to unleash itself upon them, a hunger to flee to small fellowships of the saved and away from the corruption of the public square, an embracing of a self-image as victims, and a belief that a dark cloud rests over the sum of modern times. "Even a Jewish writer—and a rabbi, too—sees the slander for what it is," they say. And thereby they confirm, for those whom the essay only angered, that David Dalin let himself be used as a Jew to advance a sectarian Catholic agenda (mine, presumably, although my friends have had the courtesy not to say that to my face). And so the whole coil curls up around itself once more, and we get no forwarder.

Perhaps a book that collected the best reviews would help. However large it personally looms, the part played by David and me was small. The attempt to sift through the endless stream of books about Pius XII in recent years was actually carried out by indefatigable reviewers in dozens of magazines and journals, responding to the texts one by one.

The controversy also motivated additional research, and new material now seems to arrive every week. As far as I can tell, all this recent information tells in favor of Pius XII. A recently discovered 1923 letter to the Vatican from Eugenio Pacelli, then nuncio to Germany, for instance, denounces Hitler's *putsch* and warns against his anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism. A document from April 1933, just months after Hitler obtained power, reveals how Pacelli (then secretary of state) ordered the new German nuncio, Cesare Orsenigo, to protest Nazi actions.

Meanwhile, newly examined diplomatic documents show that in 1937 Cardinal Pacelli warned A. W. Klieforth, the American consul to Berlin, that Hitler was "an untrustworthy scoundrel and fundamentally wicked person," to quote Klieforth, who also wrote that Pacelli "did not believe Hitler capable of moderation, and . . . fully supported the German bishops in their anti-Nazi stand." This was matched with the discovery of Pacelli's anti-Nazi report, written the following year for President Roosevelt and filed with Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, which declared that the Church regarded compromise with the Third Reich as "out of the question."

Archives from American espionage agencies have recently confirmed Pius XII's active involvement in plots to overthrow Hitler. A pair of newly found letters, written in 1940 on the letterhead of the Vatican's Secretariat of State, give Pius XII's orders that financial assistance be sent to Campagna for the explicit purpose of assisting interned Jews suffering from Mussolini's racial policies. And the Israeli government has finally released Adolf Eichmann's diaries, portions of which confirm the Vatican's obstruction of the Nazis' roundup of Rome's Jews.

There's more, a regular flow of new material. Intercepts of Nazi communications released from the United States' National Archives include such passages as "Vatican has apparently for a long time been assisting many Jews to escape," in a Nazi dispatch from Rome to Berlin on October 26, 1943, ten days after the Germany's Roman roundup. New oral testimony from such Catholic rescuers as Monsignor John Patrick Carroll-Abbing, Sister Mathilda Spielmann, Father Giacomo Martegani, and Don Aldo Brunacci insists that Pius XII gave them explicit orders and direct assistance to help persecuted Jews in Italy. The posthumous publication this year of Harold Tittmann's memoir, *Inside the Vatican of Pius XII*, is particularly interesting, for in it the American diplomat reveals, for the first time, that Pius XII's wartime conduct drew upon advice from the German resistance.

Out of all this, one might begin to build a new case *for* Pius XII. My own sense is that the anti-Pius books are coming to an end. Even small academic publishers seem to be tiring of the genre, and the market for such books may have at last dried up. Still, I could be wrong. America seems to have an inexhaustible appetite for books about World War II (especially the military aspects) and a nearly equal appetite for books about the Holocaust. Robert Katz's recent *The Battle for Rome: The Germans, the Allies, the Partisans, and the Pope* manages to marry military strategy and the Holocaust—with a large dose of bitter anti-Catholicism thrown in for good measure, the result of enduring anger about the criminal-libel case Katz lost in Italy over his earlier book blaming Pius for the massacre at the Ardeatine Caves. The success or failure of

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The Battle for Rome will be a useful measure of our current publishing situation.

But however the market looks, what we really need now is a new biography of Pius XII during those years: a nonreactive account of his life and times, a book driven not by the reviewer's instinct to answer charges but by the biographer's impulse to tell an accurate story. Before that can be done well, I think, the archives of Pius XII's pontificate will probably have to be fully catalogued and opened. Documents released here and there are useful, but useful is a dangerous word in this context, for the use is always in building an argument: a laying out of evidence to make or rebut a charge, rather than a knowledge of the Pope's day-to-day actions. The Vatican has already begun to open some archives earlier than scheduled under the various time-locks, and it promises to open more.

In the meantime, the reviewers' contributions remain. But the reviewers' dilemma remains as well: They won the battles, but how are they going to win the war? FT

Love the Lovely Boomerang

Love the lovely boomerang
remands, in command and countermand,
circumnavigations that sang
exile and reply out of the waiving hand.
The little hertz of heartbeat
(or the singing voice in graph)
so necessary, so obsolete
like the dead's last telegraph.
Love the lovely boomerang,
mahogany curved bands
in unrequited air hang
mobile—then as if in reprimand
the striped wood taciturn, turns and turns—
to the willing hand returns.

Valerie Wohlfeld

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Talking Democracy

Gilbert Meilaender

Jeffrey Stout's *Democracy and Tradition* begins with an epigraph from John Dewey: "Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association." Coming at the beginning of a book which, in certain respects, defends the appropriateness of religious speech in public debate and discussion, this sentence might warn believers to be cautious about embracing the defense offered. For to view democracy as a spiritual association may begin to raise questions about where our ultimate loyalties ought to lie, and it is a virtue of the book that it should move us to ask that question.

Democracy and Tradition—the fruit of years of reflection and development by the author—actually comprises essays on three quite different topics. They are held together chiefly by a view of democratic tradition as a largely habitual (as opposed to rationally necessary) "commitment, on the part of citizens, to talk things through with citizens unlike themselves." (There are a few places where the author also gives what one might call a "post–September 11" theme to the book, but the essays are largely complete without it.) The essays in part one sketch an understanding of American democratic tradition for which Emerson and Whitman are central and for which a "self-reliant piety," though acknowledging dependence on the sources of our existence, asserts that "it is our own responsibility to imagine" these sources and then "to fashion lives worthy of our best imaginings."

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DEMOCRACY AND TRADITION
By Jeffrey Stout
Princeton University Press
368 pp. $35.

The essays in part two treat the place and propriety of religious claims within a secular society (by which Stout means simply a society in which, even if many citizens remain personally religious, it cannot be assumed that all citizens share any religious commitments). These essays attempt to steer what Stout regards as a kind of middle way between Rawlsian social contract liberalism (which he says now dominates the law schools and ethics centers of this country) and a "new traditionalism," often religious in character and influenced especially by the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas (which he says, mistakenly in my judgment, now dominates theological schools in this country).

The essays in part three develop the philosophical underpinnings of the pragmatic understanding of moral discourse that has been at work in the first and second parts. Although Stout writes that he "seeks a public, as opposed to a narrowly professional audience," and although he is a clear writer skilled at unpacking philosophical issues, it is a bit of a stretch to suppose that these chapters in part three—quite dependent as they are on technical philosophical discussions within the academy—can reach the wide audience he seems to envision.

The best way to begin to unfold the connections among the essays will, I think, be to start with ideas developed chiefly in part two. The influential work of the late John Rawls raised important questions about the place—or even the legitimacy—of religious claims in democratic public argument. All "comprehensive doctrines" were, for

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Rawls, suspect in public discourse. Eventually he came to regard arguments grounded in comprehensive visions of the good life as allowable, but only if one also could and did give other sorts of arguments that were grounded in the terms of the social contract itself. But as Stout observes, on these terms it may be hard to say whether the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. or of Lincoln's great Second Inaugural Address should qualify as legitimate democratic discourse; yet any view that excludes them is a view we might hesitate to adopt. What concerns Stout most about the relative dominance of the Rawlsian vision is that—if taken as a proper account of democratic political life—it encourages religious believers to withdraw from that shared public life.

That is to say, the dominance of Rawls invites in response the views of the new traditionalists, though, at least in Stout's view, they to some extent mischaracterize the "secular" nature of our democratic culture. Relying especially on the work of Christopher Hill, Stout suggests that public moral discourse in the modern period became secularized—but only in the sense that no common religious assumptions could be taken for granted by all citizens. Hence, this pluralism of belief does not reflect any public commitment to an ideology of "secularism," to the sort of thing religious believers need fear. (In fact, it reflects chiefly the nature of pragmatic moral justification, as Stout develops it in the essays constituting part three. On his view, I am justified in believing a claim if, given the context of my other commitments, I have adequate reason to affirm it. But it would be quite different to say, more generally, that the claim is justified—which, in a shared discourse, would require that everyone sharing that context has good reason to believe it.) Although I don't doubt that Stout's analysis of the sense in which our public discourse is "secularized" must be in some considerable portion accurate, it is, nonetheless, hard to believe that a phenomenon such as the Supreme Court's religion clause jurisprudence in recent decades does not at all reflect what might be called an ideology of secularism. But the deeper questions actually concern our understanding of the meaning and origins of democratic freedoms in the West.

There is much to be said for the claim that a "secularized" public discourse arose in the West largely because a plurality of religious beliefs—in a world in which the unquestioned authority of feudal and ecclesiastical institutions had begun to fade—gave rise to seemingly endless religious warfare in the seventeenth century. Still, a more complicated narrative would lead to a story with a rather different plotline from Stout's. Because from very near the beginning of the Christian era sovereignty was divided and contested—between the "two swords," church and state, emperor and bishop of Rome—a sphere of personal liberty was carved out. Although this is by no means the whole story, it is not wrong to say that this liberty, without which it is impossible to conceive of the rise of a "democratic tradition," has its first source in the presence of the Church. Not only there, of course. The struggle between monarchs and lords is also an essential part of the story, as is the conflict between Catholics and Protestants—out of which those religious wars grew.

The point is, however, that the slow rise of political freedom in the West is chiefly a story of the limitation of political power—achieved through devices such as the separation of powers, through the development of commerce and institutions of civil society separate from the state, and through the continued independence of the Church. This is the history which molded citizens able to participate in the give-and-take of democratic life, and they are by no means characterized chiefly by an Emersonian "self-reliant piety." One didn't have to wait for the new traditionalists discussed by Stout to find serious thinkers who feared that an unnuanced emphasis on democratic "talk" might actually undermine liberty; many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberals held such views.

This more complicated narrative would, in turn, make for a picture of democratic society less narrowly focused on the image of conversation. It would emphasize less Stout's Emersonian picture of self-trusting individuals who create and tell their own stories, concerned primarily to resist conformity to any socially inculcated types—and would emphasize more the mediating institutions of civil society, in which we may locate the social origins of the self. Moreover, this more complex narrative would give us reason to hope that other societies with quite different histories from ours—Islamic societies, for example—could find routes to freedom and democracy that do not depend on the kind of plurality of beliefs we take for granted and that could develop without the weariness brought on by endless warfare.

In any case, if Rawlsians often characterize permitted public discourse in ways that might seem to make illegitimate the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr., a new traditionalist such as Stanley Hauerwas is, on Stout's view, at least as dangerous to our shared public life. "No theologian," he writes, "has done more [than Hauerwas] to inflame Christian resentment of secular political culture." Stout devotes a long chapter to tracing the development of Hauerwas' thought, and for anyone interested in seeing where the decisive shifts occurred—from early, influential accounts of virtue

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and narrative to later writings in which, influenced in different ways by the pacifism of John Howard Yoder and the concept of tradition developed by Alasdair MacIntyre, Hauerwas came to reject the political culture surrounding the Church "in increasingly strident terms"—this chapter will prove a helpful guide.

Nevertheless, I think Stout's account is in certain respects unfair to Hauerwas. Not that there isn't plenty in Hauerwas' more recent writings to justify the sense of a "strident" rejection of our political culture and of a "rigid dualism" separating the Church from the surrounding society. All that is present in abundance in the writings. Yet to see only this is to have the words but not the music. After all, Hauerwas has written and lectured extensively about a wide range of issues of public significance: abortion, war and peace, illness and old age, sexuality and marriage, the character of bioethics. Indeed, he has written far more on such subjects than has Stout, whose work remains for the most part at the level of method. As much as I myself disagree with both the tone and substance of some of Hauerwas' critiques of our society, I do not see how one can characterize him as dualistically rejecting or withdrawing from that society. He participates in its wider public debates, even if, of course, he does so in a far less optimistic manner than Stout's Emersonianism would wish. A more adequate response would have to take on the substance of the positions he has defended.

Stout could, of course, grant this but still argue that the manner of Hauerwas' participation belies any real commitment to democratic discussion. For Stout, democratic questioning is "a valuable social practice"; for Hauerwas, it is "one of the acids of individualism eating away at tradition." Putting the issue this way helps us to see some of its deeper implications but may also give us reasons for taking Hauerwas' concerns seriously. Stout's chief commitment is to "conversation," to citizens who "talk things through" with one another. I will return later, and from a different angle, to this metaphor, but for the moment we can focus on its implications for religion. Religious believers are permitted to enter into this conversation, but no background of religious belief is in any way necessary to sustain it. An epigraph from Bill Holm for the concluding chapter of the book, presumably placed there approvingly by Stout, expresses all too clearly the Emersonian vision at work in the book's argument: "Sacredness is unveiled through your own experience, and lives in you to the degree that you accept that experience as your teacher, mother, state, church, even, or perhaps particularly, if it comes into conflict with the abstract received wisdom that power always tries to convince you to live by."

Where does this leave us with respect to religion? "Great urgency," Stout writes, "attaches to the general project of cultivating identifications that transcend ethnicity, race, and religion." Identifications that transcend one's religious identity? Suddenly one realizes that Hauerwas has been getting at something important. And it is something that still unites him with other critics of an ideology of secularism, such as Richard John Neuhaus, who is less than approving of Hauerwas' pacifist stance. "What, in the end," Stout asks, "do Hauerwas and Neuhaus agree on, aside from calling themselves Christians?" But is that not the point? Precisely in so identifying themselves they make clear that their primary loyalty is to the "moral and spiritual association" that is the Church—the presence of which, as I noted above, is actually the first source of our tradition of liberty. If this primary loyalty must be relinquished in order to argue for democracy, the price is too high.

Friendly to the possibility of religious talk in public as *Democracy and Tradition* seeks to be, with friends like these, who needs enemies? Religion makes its way into public life in domesticated form as one identity among many—or, if refusing to be domesticated, then as something that unsurprisingly may sound just a bit strident (though I am quite ready to grant that in my preferred mode it would not have the kind of stridency in which Hauerwas has recently come to specialize). This is what happens when democracy itself is understood as a form of "spiritual association." Whether or not we think rhetoric about the acids of individualism is helpful or entirely accurate, a society composed of those who look first to the sacredness unveiled in their own experience, and who are mainly concerned "to resist conformity to socially mandated types," is a society about which we might raise various questions: Are most citizens as interested in talking as they are in associating—in associating with those who share their vision of life and want to transmit it to the next generation? Is a society filled with those persuaded of the sacredness of their own experience likely to favor the glib and sophistic? Will it be a society in which, as this vision of democratic culture gradually seeps down into other communities such as the family, it is hard to raise children? Will the acceptance of public religious speech come with the suggestion that religion lay aside its ultimate claim upon our loyalty and identity? And, if so, can such a society possibly offer hope for democratic transformation of other (e.g., Islamic) cultures, except perhaps after a new round of religious warfare?

It is worth noting, as Stout himself clearly recognizes, that one might offer something like the defense of Hauerwas I have just given, and something like the

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critique of Stout I have offered, without oneself sharing the Hauerwasian position. In the book's opening chapter Stout contrasts his preferred Emersonian vision with an Augustinian Christian vision, which emphasizes "the human spirit's need for settled institutional and communal forms." Wide as the gap may be between these two visions, their adherents could reach some political consensus. Unlike Hauerwas, some Augustinians—while agreeing that modern democracy lacks true piety, instantiates ultimately the sin of pride, and, perhaps, is characterized by a corrosive individualism—might nonetheless embrace modern democracy "somewhat ambivalently, as a way station in a long journey toward the end of human history." These sorts of Augustinians and Stout's kind of Emersonian might well reach a limited political (not ethical) consensus—though this seems less likely, I have to say, if the Emersonians really view democratic government as a form of spiritual association that ought to transcend all other sources (including religious ones) of our identity. I don't think any sort of Augustinian could affirm that.

In many respects Stout's best essays—although those least likely to find the public audience he desires—come in part three, where he unpacks the pragmatic vision of justification (relying initially on the work of Rorty but even more on others, such as Robert Brandom). This philosophical view—embedded in the pragmatic tradition and, in the end, in the Hegelian rejection of any Kantian notion of pure practical reason—supplies the underpinning for Stout's description of democratic discourse.

How should democratic argument take place? Although he (somewhat narrowly, as I noted above) locates the origins of modern democracy in the early modern break with feudal and ecclesiastical authorities, Stout does not imagine that our public discourse can get along without appeal to authorities. But given that the authorities acknowledged by citizens are likely to conflict, we must reconceive "authority in nonauthoritarian terms." This, in fact, he describes as "pragmatism's most important contribution to democracy." Appeals to authority—including even religious authorities—are necessary and permissible, but all such appeals have to be subjected to the give-and-take of democratic argument.

What, then, if not authority, justifies an argument? Here the complexities of Stout's view emerge. He offers a "contextualist" account of justification. Citizens make claims, offer arguments and reasons in support of them—and may all, from within the context of their own beliefs, be justified in the claims they make, even when those claims conflict. There is no assured way of resolving their differences, no agreed-upon starting point by which to adjudicate them, and no authority qualified to settle them. Therefore, he believes, we must cultivate ongoing and charitable conversation in which citizens hold each other accountable to offer reasons in support of their claims. It's a very talkative community Stout pictures, in some respects rather more like the academy than the polis. It makes one wonder why such citizens would have bothered to leave Locke's state of nature, in which the lack of a common power to adjudicate disputes is the major problem. It does not entirely take account of the enormous power of adjudication (and power to shut down talk) possessed by courts and regulatory bureaucracies, and it tends to forget the rather large number of citizens who—except when some threat absolutely necessitates their participation—might well prefer silent immersion in other pursuits to participation in political talk. Still, there can be no doubt that such discussion and argument—even if not as idealized as Stout depicts—must play at least some role in any democratic polity.

This contextualist account of justification in moral argument is bound to raise several important questions, and Stout takes them up along the way. Most obvious will be the concern that this account must end in moral relativism, with moral principles true only for those of us who share the appropriate context, but with no obligations that bind all people—any time, anywhere. Stout argues that this need not follow, however, since a contextual description of what it means to be justified in moral argument need not be joined to a similarly contextual account of what it means to make a true argument. Suppose I argue that it would be wrong to produce fetuses in order to mine their bodies for organs (as the state of New Jersey now permits), while my neighbor establishes a corporation aiming to do precisely that—and each of us offers reasons in support of our view. It might be that each of us—given the entire context of beliefs we hold—is justified in holding his respective belief, but this need not lead us to say that what I believe is true (simply) "for me," and that what my neighbor believes is true (simply) "for him." I remain free to hold that my view is true for all people in all times and places—and that my neighbor's view is an abomination.

Why? Because the concepts of truth and of justification behave differently in our language. Adopting a view of language that connects "meaning" with "use," Stout departs from the pragmatic tradition just enough to disagree with Dewey's definition of truth as (merely) "warranted assertibility." On the contrary, Stout thinks that we use the word "true" in ways that are clearly nonrelativist, ways that make it possible to describe some moral obligations as absolute or universal. To be sure, he offers no alternative definition of

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truth, and there may be limits to how interested we can become in a position characterized finally by a kind of positivistic refusal to move beyond how we talk (even though, of course, in adopting this view Stout relies on one well-developed strand of modern philosophy). A philosophy designed chiefly to sustain an ongoing political discussion may not always engage the questions of greatest human significance. It may leave us as permanent residents of Plato's cave, talking together of shadows on the wall of the cave.

Stout sees this and recognizes that his inclination to find more metaphysical talk rather useless is not likely to be shared by everyone. For example, how might one make sense of a "higher" or "universal" law in terms of Stout's theory? Such a universal law would, as he notes, be that "infinitely large set consisting of all the true moral claims" that there are. But, of course, none of us could—given the context of what we know and believe—be justified in believing all of these true claims. So although this higher law exists and may be known in part by all of us, the higher law itself—as the totality of true claims—is an "imaginative projection." It is "little more than an imaginative embellishment of the gap between the concepts of truth and justification," useful primarily for reminding us that any of our actual moral codes is likely to be deficient in countless ways and in need of criticism. One might wonder, however, whether a moral law that is, finally, our own "imaginative embellishment" retains the capacity to judge us and our society.

This concern comes especially naturally to religious thinkers, and Stout takes it up through a discussion of the work of Robert M. Adams. Precisely in order to keep the moral law from collapsing into a projection of what we ourselves desire and admire, Adams develops a complex theory of moral obligation in terms of divine commands. This gives the moral law a ground outside the realm of any society's practices. Stout, by contrast, wants an "ethics without metaphysics" (the title of one of his chapters). I suspect, though, that he has given us only a "politics without metaphysics." Recalling the possibility of a certain political consensus between Augustinians and Emersonians, we can grant that this need not be bad. When he writes that "if the God of the philosophers is dead, not everything is permitted," he may be right about political life. But good politics and good ethics are not the same. In declining to pursue very far questions about how the moral law finally judges us, in contenting himself with declaring that the existence of conflicting communities of competent judges is less a philosophical puzzle than a practical question, he loses some of the depth of our moral experience. The picture in which he delights—of "a loosely structured democratic conversation in which variously situated selves tell their own stories on their own terms"—may perhaps portray adequately a politics in which nothing is ever finally settled, but it is inadequate for describing a moral world in which sound judgment requires more than being true to oneself, and in which cultural and religious traditions are more than resources for personal self-cultivation. "The excellence of self-trust" has difficulty bending the knee and produces a world more narrow than heroic.

About this picture of democratic political life as charitable conversation, there remain yet two things to note. The first harks back to Stout's critique of Hauerwas discussed above. I suggested that, despite his careful discussion of the development of Hauerwas' thought, Stout was finally a little unfair—contenting himself with noting the "strident" (and, for Stout, less than charitable) character of Hauerwas' criticisms of democratic culture, without really engaging the substance of the countless essays on particular moral topics that Hauerwas has written over the years. Recalling this directs our attention to a genuine flaw in *Democracy and Tradition*.

The sophisticated argument in the book comes almost entirely at the level of philosophical method. This argument calls for public debate marked by civil discourse, by a charitable spirit, and by reason-giving. Yet when Stout himself renders moral judgments in this book, they almost always—and, I have to say, disappointingly—have the character of obiter dicta. They are simply announced, unencumbered by reasons. Consider, for example, the following passage from the book's concluding chapter:

> More recently, our arrogant use of massively destructive military power announces that one nation, unconstrained by international law, will henceforth decide which regimes stand or fall. When our leaders oppose or support tyranny as it suits them, why suppose them to be interested in justice? They deliberately confuse the public about their reasons for war and the facts that justify resorting to it. They pretend to know the price of their policies in dollars, in the goodwill of other nations, and in human life. They extol humility, tradition, compassion, and democracy, while laying plans to rule the world. They propose their own will as the standard of right or wrong.

Complicated issues all. Perhaps the charitable way to interpret such a passage is to see it as an unfortunate attempt to take a book that is largely theoretical, written for fellow academicians, and to give it (post–September 11) a pitch that might seem to make it suitable

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for a larger audience. Even so, would it be wrong to call such a passage "strident"? It is not an exercise in reason-giving. And it belies the counsel to be charitable.

Finally, we might wonder whether the guiding image of this book—conversation—is not better suited as a characterization of academic than political life. Stout has drawn the image of conversation from Rorty, but its deeper source can be found in Michael Oakeshott's discussion of the several voices in "the conversation of mankind" (though Rorty and Stout both eschew Oakeshott's sense that philosophy is the search for what, as whole and complete, goes beyond any single voice in this conversation and seeks the coherence—at least in thought—of the whole). For Oakeshott, however, conversation characterizes not politics but the academy. Far from being a moral and spiritual association, politics is a realm of practice that concerns itself with the general arrangements necessary for a cooperative life among a group of people whom chance or choice have brought together.

Unlike politics—where decisions must be reached and goals pursued, where results count for a great deal—a university education provides the true image of an endless conversation. Such a conversation, Oakeshott writes, "does not need a chairman, it has no predetermined course, we do not ask what it is 'for,' and we do not judge its excellence by its conclusion; it has no conclusion, but is always put by for another day." Captivating as this image is, much as we might wish it really characterized our own colleges and universities today, it cannot, of course, be adequate as a depiction of the rest of life—in which children must be raised, enemies confronted, goals pursued, and the Eternal (with whom one does not simply converse) confronted. Hence, writes Oakeshott, "the characteristic gift of a university is the gift of an interval." It is not the whole of life, but a moment in life—and it is perhaps the characteristic vice of the academician (even if understandable for one whose life is spent fostering such an interval of conversation in the lives of his students) to try to extend it beyond its proper reach. Recognizing the lure of that, Oakeshott also sees that it cannot and should not be so extended. "It belongs to the character of an interim to come to an end; there is a time for everything and nothing should be prolonged beyond its time. The eternal undergraduate is a lost soul." To miss this is more than a philosophical mistake; it is bad for democracy. FT

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The Church as Culture

Robert Louis Wilken

Last spring on a trip to Erfurt, the medieval university town in Germany famous for its Augustinian cloister in which Martin Luther was ordained to the priesthood, I learned that only 20 percent of its population today professes adherence to Christianity. In fact, when the topic of religion came up in a conversation with a young woman in a hotel lounge, and I asked her if she was a member of a church, she replied without hesitation: *Ich bin Heide*—"I am a heathen."

It is hardly surprising to discover pagans in the heart of Western Europe where Christianity once flourished: a steep decline in the number of Christians has been underway for generations, even centuries. What surprised me was the absence of embarrassment in her use of the term "heathen." She did not say that she no longer went to church or that she was not a believer. For her, Christianity, no doubt the religion of her grandparents if not her parents, was simply not on the horizon. I remembered that two days earlier my train had stopped at Fulda, where St. Boniface, the apostle to the Germans, is buried. Boniface had gone to Germany to *convert* the heathen, and in a spectacular and courageous gesture he felled the sacred oak at Geismar. The astonished onlookers soon hearkened to Boniface's preaching and received baptism. It would seem that if Christianity is ever to flourish again in the land between the Rhine and the Elbe, a new Boniface will have to appear to fell the sacred oaks of European secularism.

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Yet what made an even deeper impression on me in Europe was the debate over the preface to the new constitution of the European Union. I was living in Italy at the time and had been following the discussion in the Italian press. All the nations of the EU are historically Christian, and the very idea of Europe was the work of Christian civilization. The Carolingians, Christian kings, first brought together the peoples west and the east of the Rhine to form a political alliance, with the blessing of the bishop of Rome. The story of Europe is a spiritual drama impelled by religious convictions, not by geography, economics, or technology. Yet the framers of the EU constitution refuse even to mention the name of Christianity in its preface. While readily acknowledging the inheritance of pagan Greece and Rome, and even the Enlightenment, Europe's political-bureaucratic elites have chosen to excise any mention of Christianity from Europe's history. Not only have they excluded Christianity from a role in Europe's future; they have banished it from Europe's past. One wonders whether the new Europe, uprooted from its Christian soil, will continue to promote the spiritual values that have made Western Civilization unique.

Talking to the young woman in Erfurt and listening in on the debate about the EU constitution I found myself musing on the future of Christian culture. In my lifetime we have witnessed the collapse of Christian civilization. At first the process of disintegration was slow, a gradual and persistent attrition, but today it has moved into overdrive, and what is more troubling, it has become deliberate and intentional, not only promoted by the cultured despisers of Christianity but often aided and abetted by Christians themselves.

Take, for example, the calendar. I am not thinking primarily of Santa displacing the Christ child or the

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Easter Bunny replacing the Resurrection; nor do I mean the transfer of festivals that fall in midweek (e.g., Epiphany or Pentecost or All Saints) to the nearest Sunday. I mean the dramatic, wholesale evacuation of Sunday as a holy day. At eleven o'clock on Sunday morning at Home Depot or Lowe's the lines of folks with cans of paint, two-by-fours, and joint cement stretch almost as far as they do on a Saturday morning. The only lingering difference between Sunday and other days of the week is that the malls open later and close earlier. The churches, particularly the bishops of the Catholic Church, were complicit in the desacralization of Sunday as a holy day when they introduced late Saturday afternoon liturgies, called Vigil Masses. A more fitting name would be McMasses. The faithful can fulfill their obligation by slipping into church for a half hour or so on Saturday afternoon and then have Sunday to themselves without the pesky inconvenience of getting the family up for Mass.

Of course, one might retort that in the United States (unlike in Europe) the churches are flourishing and the number of Christians is growing. Yes, there are many Christians in the U.S., but can we still claim to be a Christian society? If one uses any measure other than individual adherence (what people say if asked) or even church attendance, it is undeniable that the influence of Christianity on the life and mores of our society is on the wane. And the decline is likely to continue. Which leads to a question: Can Christian faith—no matter how enthusiastically proclaimed by evangelists, how ably expounded by theologians and philosophers, or how cleverly translated into the patois of the intellectual class by apologists—be sustained for long without the support of a nurturing Christian culture? By culture, I do not mean high culture (Bach's B-Minor Mass, Caravaggio's *The Calling of St. Matthew*); I mean the "total harvest of thinking and feeling," to use T. S. Eliot's phrase—the pattern of inherited meanings and sensibilities encoded in rituals, law, language, practices, and stories that can order, inspire, and guide the behavior, thoughts, and affections of a Christian people.

When one understands culture in this way, the classical distinction between Christ and culture, popularized in H. Richard Niebuhr's 1950s book by that title, gives us little help. Some have observed, accurately in my view, that one difficulty with his analysis is that "culture" is really another term for "world," the unredeemed territory in which human beings live. For Niebuhr the question is how the gospel, Christ, can penetrate the world, culture, without losing its distinctive character.

It seems to me, however, that the deficiency with the Christ-and-Culture scheme lies not in Niebuhr's understanding of culture but in his view of Christ. For Niebuhr, Christ is a theological idea, and most of his book is taken up by an analysis of Christian thinkers who illustrate five basic types of the relation between this theological idea and culture. Niebuhr is largely silent about the actual historical experience of the Church, about culture on the ground, about institutions such as the episcopacy and the papacy (there is no mention of Gregory VII and the investiture controversy), monasticism, civil and canon law, calendar, and the ordering of civic space (the church standing on the central city square). But Christ entered history as a community, a society, not simply as a message, and the form taken by the community's life *is* Christ within society. The Church is a culture in its own right. Christ does not simply infiltrate a culture; Christ creates culture by forming another city, another sovereignty with its own social and political life.

With these admittedly sketchy observations in mind, let me turn to three moments in the Church's history to illustrate how Christ becomes culture and endures as culture.

By the middle of the second century, Christians were beginning to be known in the Roman world, but they did not bear the marks usually associated with a distinctive community. In the oft-cited passage from the so-called *Epistle to Diognetus* (it is really an apology), Christians are distinguished from others not by nationality, language, or by custom. They do not have their own cities, and their way of life is inconspicuous. It was known that Christians honored Christ as God, refused to venerate the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and gathered regularly for a ritual meal. Yet there was little else to identify them. They met in the homes of the wealthier members; they used in their worship the language of the city in which they dwelled; they owned no land; they had no temples (in fact, no buildings at all), no cemeteries of their own, and no religious calendar. The bishop was not a public personage and the Church, as a social entity, was invisible.

Take, for example, the earliest Christian art. If a Christian living in 200 A.D. wished to have an object in his home that gave artistic expression to Christian belief, what might it be? He would go to a craftsman and select a lamp stamped with a conventional symbol that could yield a Christian interpretation: a dove, a fish, a ship, an anchor, or a shepherd carrying a lamp. When placed in a Christian home, a symbol which had one meaning to the Romans was invested with a Christian meaning: the dove for gentleness; the fish for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior; the shepherd for *philanthropia* or Christ the good shepherd. In buying

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and displaying objects such as lamps or rings or seals, Christians created the first Christian art (of which we have knowledge), but what the symbols represented lay in the eyes of the beholder, not in the object. As far as Roman society was concerned Christianity was invisible.

At the beginning of the third century, however, Christians in Rome took a bold stride. They pooled their resources to purchase a plot of land on the Via Appia Antica outside the city; there they constructed an underground burial chamber and commissioned artists to decorate the walls and ceilings with frescoes. A Roman Christian by the name of Callistus, who later became bishop of Rome, oversaw the construction, which today is known as the Catacomb of St. Callistus. Only a few of the paintings have survived, but the catacomb itself is largely intact. It is not simply a few burial niches, but a vast underground cemetery with chapels, ceiling and wall decorations, and paintings that depict persons and stories from the Bible. Its construction represents an organized effort (diggers, designers, plasterers, painters) on the part of the Christian community in Rome to create a distinctively Christian space. The catacombs were not hideouts during persecution; they were burial grounds and places of worship, and their location was not secret. When Christians buried their dead or went to the catacomb to celebrate the Eucharist their activities were evident to their fellow citizens.

The construction of a Christian catacomb required planning and money to choose the layout and décor and to pay the workmen. Most of the rooms are square, allowing for a symmetrical design to be imprinted on a ceiling of white plaster. The ceiling generally has a painted medallion at the apex to highlight a prominent image. In some rooms the figure of a young shepherd carrying a lamb on his shoulders occupies this central medallion. Other images portray the figure of Orpheus (understood as Christ) holding his lyre and surrounded by animals (Christ, unlike Orpheus, tames even the wildest of beasts, the human being, said Clement of Alexandria), Daniel as a heroic nude, and Jonah being cast overboard. The form of the images is familiar from Roman art, but by putting them together with wall paintings—Abraham with Isaac, Moses striking the rock in the desert, Daniel in the lion's den, and Jesus being baptized in the Jordan—these Roman Christians created a uniquely Christian sanctuary.

What the Christians undertook on the Via Appia Antica was being done by other Christian communities at about the same time. As the art historian Corby Finney has observed, "A cultural event of some importance was taking place," and we can see here a "transition from models of accomodation and adaptation that were materially invisible to a new level of Christian identity that was palpable and visible." For the first time Christians were beginning to create a "material culture," something that is tangible, occupies space, is public (though underground), and is distinctively Christian.

The Christians who planned and built this catacomb had given as much thought to their undertaking as bishops and philosophers had invested in defending the faith, expounding the Scriptures, or meeting the arguments of critics. Significantly, Christian culture first takes material shape in connection with caring for and remembering the dead. Memory, especially of the faithful departed, is a defining mark of Christian identity. The living joined their prayers with the saints' prayers, which, according to the book of Revelation, were "golden bowls full of incense." In organizing the community to construct a burial place and in decorating it with pictures depicting biblical stories, Christians were fashioning a communal public identity that would endure over the generations. As the Apostles' Creed has it (in its earliest meaning), "I believe in communion with the saints." Their aim was not to communicate the gospel to an alien culture but to nurture the Church's inner life.

A second moment at which we see Christ becoming culture comes from a later period, and here the idiom is not space but time, the creation of a Christian calendar. Theologians and biblical scholars have made much of the New Testament understanding of *kairos*, the time when something decisive is to happen, an extraordinary moment long awaited. "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). But there is another kind of time, the marking of days and seasons. For the earliest Christians there was only one day, the day of the resurrection celebrated each time the community gathered, normally on Sunday. Already in the book of Revelation there is mention of the "Lord's Day," the *Kyriake Hemera* (Revelation 1:10) and in the Didache we hear of the "Day of the Lord" (Didache 14). By the middle of the second century, Christians had begun to celebrate a yearly festival, the Paschal Feast (death and resurrection of Christ) that began with a vigil on Saturday evening and continued through the night until the morning.

Over time other feasts were added. Christmas had begun to be observed in Rome in the middle of the fourth century. The Chronograph of Rome, a kind of calendar compiled for Roman Christians around the same time, lists Roman holidays, burial dates of

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Roman bishops and martyrs, and the birth of Christ, all in calendrical, not historical, order. "On the eighth day of the calends of January Christ was born in Bethlehem in Judea." Christmas was soon complemented by the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, forty days after his birth. Ascension and Pentecost became fixed days. The Christian year was organized into two major cycles, one centered on Christ's birth, the other on his suffering, death, and resurrection. Like the earliest (and later) Christian art, the liturgical year (as we now call it) had a narrative shape drawn from the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels. Through ritual it imprinted the biblical narrative on the minds and hearts of the faithful, not simply as a matter of private devotion but as a fully public act setting the rhythm of communal life.

At the beginning of the third century, Christians were less than one percent of the Roman empire's population of some sixty million. By 300 A.D., there may have been six million Christians in the empire, but by mid-century the number had risen to over thirty million, about half of the total population. This rapid growth, with the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity and his vigorous program of building churches, changed public practice. Significantly, the Christian calendar became a civic calendar. In 321 Constantine made Sunday a public holiday. It is shallow and petulant to rail against the political aspects of Constantinianism while ignoring the efforts of Christians of ancient times to stamp the face of Christ upon their society, in the ordering of time, in architecture, and in law (e.g., prohibiting the exposure of infants, a traditional form of "birth control"). The purpose of making Sunday into a holy day was to provide time for Christians to attend public worship, but it had the secondary effect of making Sunday a day of leisure, thereby laying the groundwork for a Christian Sabbath.

It should also be remembered that the success of Christianity also altered the marking of historical time. Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk in the sixth century, was the first to date events "from the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Anno Domini*, A.D.). His scheme was adopted in the seventh century in England at the Synod of Whitby and was used by the Venerable Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

To the calendrical framework of Christmas, Presentation, Pasch, Ascension, and Pentecost were added special days remembering the martyrs and saints. Over time, the turning points in the year—the changing of seasons, the planting and harvesting of crops, the slaughtering of animals—took place on days named for saints or for events in the life of Christ.

The liturgical calendar makes religious remembrance habitual and familiar. The repetition of saints' days and festivals of the Lord is a kind of spiritual metronome helping communal life to move in concord with the mysteries of the faith.

We should not underestimate the cultural significance of the calendar and its indispensability for a mature spiritual life. Religious rituals carry a resonance of human feeling accumulated over the centuries. They cannot easily be created and are hard to recover once left to languish. They touch us more deeply than national commemorations, such as the Fourth of July or Memorial Day. The season of Advent, for example, is a predictable reminder that the Church lives by another time, marked in the home by a simple ritual, the lighting of a violet Advent candle set in an evergreen wreath on a dark evening in early December.

Because feast days and sacred seasons run at right angles to the conventional calendar they offer a regular and fixed cessation of activity and, thus, the gift of leisure (a sine qua non of culture, as Josef Pieper has taught us). Feast days become times of reflection and contemplation that open us to mystery and transcendence. How soon, wrote W. H. Auden, "must we reenter, when lenient days are done, the world of work and money and minding our p's and q's."

A third mode in which Christianity formed its own culture is language. In his magisterial *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, historian Henri Marrou describes the grammatical and rhetorical milieu in which Augustine was educated in the Roman Empire of the late fourth century; he reports that in Augustine's day educated Christians were the beneficiaries of an educational system that had been in place for hundreds of years. When Augustine wrote his treatise *On Christian Doctrine* (an essay on interpreting and expounding the Scriptures), he could assume that his readers knew Latin grammar and the standard rhetorical techniques.

But a hundred years later such knowledge could no longer be taken for granted. Few cities could any longer meet the expense of paying teachers and maintaining schools. Beginning in the sixth century a number of distinguished educators emerged in the Church, persons such as Boethius, Cassiodorus, Benedict of Nursia, Isidore of Seville, and the Venerable Bede. Their task was not, as Augustine's had been, to transform what had been received; it was, rather, to preserve and transmit what was being forgotten or to translate what could no longer be read. Christianity now assumed responsibility for managing the mechanisms of the Latin language.

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Cassiodorus was born in 485 to a southern Italian senatorial family. During his middle years he served in the court of the Ostrogothic kings of Italy, putting his literary talents to work compiling edicts and official letters and recording notable events. When he was seventy years old he returned home and founded a monastery at Squillace on the southernmost coast of Italy. There he moved his library and gathered a company of scholars to make copies of the Scriptures and the classics of Latin Christian literature, to translate Greek works, and to write a compendium of Christian and secular learning.

Cassiodorus' compendium is markedly different from the writings of Augustine, Ambrose, or Jerome. Its chief purpose was to provide his readers with elementary instruction in "divine letters." So Cassiodorus begins with a listing of the books of the Bible, the order and division of the books, how they are to be interpreted, and brief comments on Christian teachers, such as Hilary, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome. But then one comes upon a chapter entitled, "On Scribes and the Remembering of Correct Spelling." In the second part of the book, on "secular letters," he devotes a section to grammar, which he calls "the foundation of liberal studies." His aim was to transmit the basic skills of grammar and rhetoric for the purpose of copying the Scriptures accurately, because "every word of the Lord written by the scribe is a wound inflicted on Satan." When Cassiodorus was ninety years old he wrote *On Orthography*, a spelling handbook for his copyists. (The Latin letters v and b were particularly troublesome to copyists who worked by ear.)

Another writer known almost wholly for his grammatical, linguistic, and encyclopedic studies is the Spanish bishop Isidore of Seville. Though not a thinker of the first rank, he is comfortably seated in the second. (Dante places him in the fourth heaven, along with the Venerable Bede and Richard of St. Victor.) Born into the landed gentry of Cartagena, he was educated in a monastic school in Seville under the supervision of his brother Leander, who was the bishop of Seville. In 600 he succeeded his brother as bishop and subsequently had a profound influence on the liturgy and laws of the Spanish Church.

Isidore's *Etymologies* is an immense encyclopedia, an attempt to summarize all knowledge by drawing on the vast reservoir of classical writers, and his *Liber differentiarum sive de proprietate sermonum* deals with the meanings of words and the distinctions one must make to use them correctly (something like a Fowler's *Modern English Usage*).

Isidore recognized that grammar, "the science of expressing oneself correctly," is crucial not only for reading, writing, and speaking, but also for thinking and understanding. Grammar is knowledge of the way language works and of the rules that govern the relation of words and concepts. Without grammar there can be no transmission of the text of the Scriptures and no understanding of its content; hence, no grammar, no Christian culture.

Culture lives by language, and the sentiments, thoughts, and feelings of a Christian culture are formed and carried by the language of the Scriptures. St. Augustine, for instance, believed that there was a distinctively Christian language, what he called the Church's way of speaking (*ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudo*). He considered the term "martyr" (witness) to be a word sanctioned by the Bible (notably in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles) and hallowed by early Christian usage. It would be "contrary to the usage of the Church," said Augustine, to replace it with the conventional Latin term for hero, *vir*. *Salvator* (savior) is also a biblical word with pronounced Christian overtones: *natus est vobis hodie Salvator, qui est Christus Dominus*. In conventional Latin *salus* meant health, not salvation. Christians, however, coined the words *salvare* (to save) and *salvator* (savior); in doing so they began to create a Christian language formed by the Scriptures.

There are some words and phrases in Christian culture that are simply irreplaceable. Words and phrases such as "obedience," "grace," "long-suffering" (the biblical form of patience), "image of God," "suffering servant," "adoption," "will of God"—when used again and again—form our imagination and channel our affections. The recitation of the psalms day after day, week after week, transforms the words of the psalmists from texts to be interpreted into words we use to praise, beseech, confess, thank, and adore God—as well as words by which we know ourselves before God, "O Lord, Thou has searched me and known me! . . . Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether."

If there is a distinctly Christian language, we must be wary of translation. We cannot hand on to the next generation what the words signify if we do not hold fast to the words. Jerusalem cannot become Paris or Moscow or New York without losing its rootedness in the biblical narrative. Certain words must be used as they have been received in Christian speech, e.g., "Father," "Son," "Holy Spirit," "Lord" (as in "Lord, have mercy"), "glory" (as used in the Gospel of John for Christ's passion), "sin" ("against thee only have I sinned"), "emptied" (as in "emptied himself taking the form of a servant"), "resurrection" (as in "raised

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from the dead on the third day"), "flesh" (as in "works of the flesh," i.e., mental acts such as idolatry and jealousy, not only sins of the body, such as fornication), even "self" (as in the parable of the elder brother—"he came to himself"). It will not do to erase the term "self" and put in its place "came to his senses," as the current Catholic lectionary has it; nor will it do to reword, out of ignorance and ideology, the first verse of Psalm 1, turning "blessed is the man," into "blessed are those who" (as the New Revised Standard Version does), thereby excluding the ancient christological reading of the psalm.

Material culture and with it art, calendar and with it ritual, grammar and with it language, particularly the language of the Bible—these are only three of many examples (monasticism would be another) that could be brought forth to exemplify the thick texture of Christian culture, the fullness of life in the community that is Christ's form in the world.

Nothing is more needful today than the survival of Christian culture, because in recent generations this culture has become dangerously thin. At this moment in the Church's history in this country (and in the West more generally) it is less urgent to convince the alternative culture in which we live of the truth of Christ than it is for the Church to tell itself its own story and to nurture its own life, the culture of the city of God, the Christian republic. This is not going to happen without a rebirth of moral and spiritual discipline and a resolute effort on the part of Christians to comprehend and to defend the remnants of Christian culture. The unhappy fact is that the society in which we live is no longer neutral about Christianity. The United States would be a much less hospitable environment for the practice of the faith if all the marks of Christian culture were stripped from our public life and Christian behavior were tolerated only in restricted situations.

If Christian culture is to be renewed, habits are more vital than revivals, rituals more edifying than spiritual highs, the creed more penetrating than theological insight, and the celebration of saints' days more uplifting than the observance of Mother's Day. There is great wisdom in the maligned phrase *ex opere operato*, the effect is in the doing. Intention is like a reed blowing in the wind. It is the doing that counts, and if we do something for God, in the doing God does something for us.

The poet Dana Gioia, the current director of the National Endowment for the Arts, puts it nicely in the poem "Autumn Inaugural":

> There will always be those who reject ceremony,
> who claim that resolution requires no fanfare,
> those who demand the spirit stay fixed
> like a desert saint, fed only on faith,
> to worship in no temple but the weather.

Gioia acknowledges the point:

> Symbols betray us.
> They are always more or less than what
> is really meant.

Then:

> But shall there be no
> processions by torchlight because we are weak?
>
> Praise to the rituals that celebrate change,
> old robes worn for new beginnings,
> solemn protocol where the mutable soul,
> surrounded by ancient experience,
> grows young in the imagination's white dress.
>
> Because it is not the rituals we honor
> but our trust in what they signify, these rites
> that honor us as witnesses—whether to watch
> lovers swear loyalty in a careless world
> or a newborn washed with water and oil.

If Christ is culture, let the sidewalks be lit with fire on Easter Eve, let traffic stop for a column of Christians waving palm branches on a spring morning, let streets be blocked off as the faithful gather for a Corpus Christi procession. Then will others know that there is another city in their midst, another commonwealth, one that has its face, like the faces of angels, turned toward the face of God. FT

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Books in Review

Bible Battles

God's Bestseller: William Tyndale, Thomas More, and the Writing of the English Bible—A Story of Martyrdom and Betrayal. By Brian Moynahan. *St. Martin's. 422 pp. $27.95.*

Reviewed by James R. Stoner, Jr.

"They were smuggling . . . books?" exclaimed the young woman incredulously. She had seen me reading Brian Moynahan's *God's Bestseller* as we sat waiting in the jury pool and asked me what it was about. The setting, and the question, would have pleased its author, for Moynahan aims to report the intrigue that accompanied the rendering of the Bible into English and to prosecute a case against the man who would have blocked its way.

The hero of his tale and the victim of the intrigue is William Tyndale, English priest, Oxford-trained linguist, and early Lutheran, who flees to the Continent and translates the New Testament and the Pentateuch from the original tongues into a sturdy, poetical English that becomes the basis of the King James Bible. The accused is St. Thomas More, Councilor of King Henry VIII and Chancellor of the Realm, who denounces Tyndale as a heretic, searches out and burns his translation, writes at incredible length to refute his treatises, and, Moynahan speculates, spitefully procures Tyndale's arrest on the Continent shortly before his own execution, thus destroying him from beyond the grave. There is scandal, of course, in the sins of saints, as Moynahan knows. *God's Bestseller* is ultimately a reckless book for its libel of More, but it is partially redeemed by its drawing attention to an episode of English history that no student of the Reformation, Catholic or Protestant, can afford to ignore.

A writer of popular histories of Russia, the author of *The Faith: A History of Christianity*, and a former foreign correspondent and European editor for London's *Sunday Times*, Moynahan has a historian's skill at setting a scene and a journalist's nose for a great story. He starts with the ceremony in 1428 condemning Wycliffe posthumously as a heretic—the exhumation and immolation of his bones and the scattering of his ashes—and artfully proceeds to explain the origins of the English statutes against heresy and biblical translation, the Lollard rebels, the consequent link between heresy, translation, and sedition in the English mind, and the larger troubles of the papacy and the Church. His story of Tyndale's relations with More and his associates in Henrician London, in Antwerp, and in the flow of published books between them is fetchingly told and full of interesting twists and turns. Under suspicion in the countryside for his preaching and opinions, Tyndale arrived in London in 1523, having conceived his project of translating the Bible into English, naïvely proposing that he be given a position in the household of Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall to perform the task, and waiting the summer for the bishop's reply.

Unsuccessful in his suit but befriended by the London community of German merchants, Tyndale went back to the Continent and began his work and wandering, going first to Hamburg and eventually to Antwerp, by way of Wittenberg, Cologne, and Worms—so adept at lying low that he allowed no portrait to be made of him in his lifetime. Indeed, he leaves biographers guessing at his whereabouts from year to year. By 1526 his English New Testament had been published, smuggled into England, and burned; meanwhile, Tyndale learned Hebrew and, successfully evading agents sent by Henry to capture him, published an English Pentateuch in 1530.

Interwoven is the tale of the King's passion for Anne Boleyn, important not only as the motive for the final break with Rome but also because Anne and her family were protectors of emerging Protestants. Anne is known to have kept a copy of Tyndale's New Testament and to have shared at least one of his other tracts with Henry. Moynahan simultaneously bemoans and exults in Tyndale's simplicity in insisting on the validity of Henry's first marriage—on the one hand imagining an earlier and easier Reformation in England had the translator supported Henry's cause, and on the other welcoming the evidence of Tyndale's honest reading of biblical command without regard for earthly reward. Of the pursuit of heresy by More and his associates Moynahan's account is much less sympathetic, but at least it acknowledges from time to time that, even apart from the spiritual issue, the authorities faced a real threat: "Tyndale and his fellow Bible-men, as More suspected, were indeed fuelling future wars of religion [which] caused, in the regions where they were most virulent, a carnage as great as that of the Black Death, . . . and infinitely more prolonged."

Moynahan is at his eloquent best in describing the electric effect that first reading the Bible in their native

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tongue had on Englishmen of the 1520s and '30s and in illustrating the power of Tyndale's poetic voice to craft the words that English speakers take for granted as the Word of God. Following the scholarly work of David Daniell and citing the computerized comparisons, he establishes that between 80 and 90 percent of what we know as the King James Version of those books that Tyndale translated is identical to Tyndale's text, and he readily confirms this intuitively by quoting Tyndale's versions of the most familiar passages—the start of Genesis and of John's Gospel, the Beatitudes, and much more.

The King James commission, recently dubbed "God's Secretaries," added discretion to poetic brilliance, replacing Tyndale's translation of *ecclesia* (as "congregation") with "church" and his translation of *agape* (as "love") with "charity." More had found Tyndale's choices indicative of heresy. The commissioners removed his Lutheran prefaces and marginalia, but the secret of their success is that they worked from a gifted stylist who had mastered the rhythms of the original tongues. Moynahan's love for biblical English is infectious, and the implicit condemnation of the gifted humanist More for failing to hear it is his most telling point. His account of the book-smuggling trade along the coasts of England, too, is colorful and engaging. And to a generation that has watched and joined a revolution in information technology, his discussion of the technology, economics, and politics of the emergence of book publishing will seem fresh and exciting. It makes our experience small by comparison, for we only get faster the information that most of us could have gotten anyway, while publishing made available for a few pennies texts that a generation before had been affordable only to the rich or to those with a position in the institutional preserves of wealth.

AGAINST MORE, though, Moynahan is unrelenting, careless, and unjust. The gist of his accusation is nothing new. As scholars such as John Guy and Richard Marius have shown, the suppression of heresy and the pursuit of heretics were central to More's public career, and England was a free enough society in those days for More's activities to have gained him critics and to have elicited his published response. From Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* in 1563 through Jasper Ridley's *The Statesman and the Fanatic* in 1982 (Wolsey is the statesman, More the fanatic), More has been excoriated as the proto-tormenter of Protestants, and More indeed made no secret of his opinion of Tyndale, publishing what was apparently at the time the longest book ever written in English in order to refute his heresies.

The specific disputes concerning More's treatment of alleged heretics whom he captured or imprisoned have been much rehearsed in recent scholarship, and on the whole he has been exonerated of acting illegally even by writers such as Guy and Marius, who hold no brief for More. Though Moynahan cites some of these works in his discussion of his sources, he almost always chooses to believe the worst of More. That More acted with vigor within a legal regime that permitted warrantless searches, imprisonment without a speedy trial, and interrogation without the benefit of counsel is undeniable. (One would have to have been asleep for the past few years not to be able to imagine circumstances in which governmental officials might reasonably think it

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their duty to act with such vigor.) To bend one's mind to understand a world that coupled heresy with treason and thought them to be imminently destructive of social peace and decent freedom is admittedly beyond the agility of many in a liberal age, unless they can somehow see how liberalism itself has little room for those who call its premises into doubt.

But Moynahan's indictment goes beyond liberal prejudice or Protestant loyalty. Though he has the journalist's annoying habit of feigning objectivity by saying something mean from time to time even about his friends, he is accurate enough when he writes, "Both More and Tyndale produced invective by the yard," and anyone who has ploughed through even a portion of the polemic between the two can sympathize with his summation of its effect: "Tyndale knew a thousand ways to skin the pope, and More to flay the heretic, and they used them all, several times over, so that they penetrate the modern mind—free of the awe of those words, *pope*, *heretic*, and their terrible accoutrements, *inquisitor*, *stake*, *fire*—with the shrill inconsequence of a faulty burglar alarm." Here he is disingenuous, however, for he treats Tyndale's invective as inconsequential but takes More's as evidence of malice, obsession, and unadulterated hatred. Psychological diagnoses of More's bitterness towards the emerging Protestants are nothing new, but Moynahan is a particularly harsh analyst, begrudging More even a comment made in passing: when a heretic departs England under a pass of safe conduct, and More says, "Let him go this once, for God shall find His time full well," Moynahan concludes that More means to track him down abroad and see him burnt.

Bias in interpreting the polemics is probably inevitable: Any faithful Catholic must still shudder at Tyndale's fierce denial of the sacraments and humorless mockery of the pope, and a good Protestant can bristle at the accusation of heresy and find the suppression of English Bibles incomprehensible. Moynahan's charge that More procured Tyndale's arrest, nevertheless, is no mere matter of interpretation. He admits he has no evidence for it beyond More's published disdain for the man and More's skill when in office in using spies and agents. Such was the renegade Oxford graduate Henry Phillips, who earned Tyndale's trust in Antwerp and then betrayed him to the Emperor's men. Never mind that the only record of any tie between

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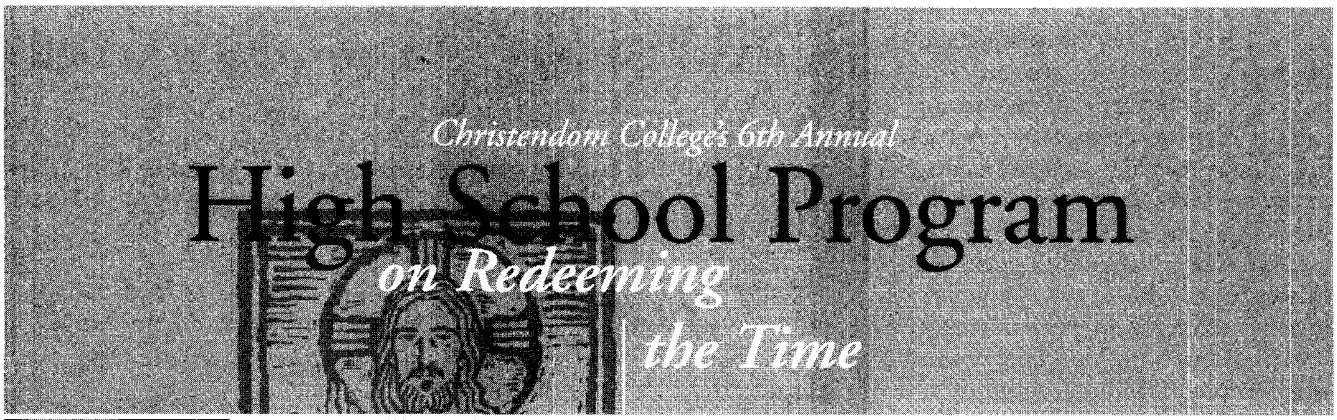
More and Phillips is that Phillips once, in Rome, said falsely that he was one of More's relations. Never mind that More had already been in the Tower for several months when Phillips would have been hired; security was lax, says Moynahan. Never mind that More's pension had been suspended and that, according to tradition, his family was short of funds in his absence; he was wealthy enough to have saved a purse for the purpose, says Moynahan. Never mind that none of the biographies of More allege any involvement—other than publishing his polemics—in the pursuit of heretics during the nearly two years between his resignation of his office and his arrest; Moynahan so alleges, and does so without reference to a source. In an interview, Phillips mentioned Barnes in the same breath as Tyndale, and since More had written against both, he was, Moynahan concludes, Phillips' patron in betrayal. Why Moynahan would stretch inference so far becomes clear when he points out that, with More in the Tower, Barnes had been rehabilitated in London and had even been sent by Henry on a mission to Luther's companion in Germany, Philip Melanchthon: "Betrayal of a royal diplomat to a foreign power [was] an act that was classified as treason," writes Moynihan. Thus, even if Richard Rich did perjure himself at More's trial—and Moynahan hasn't the temerity to deny that Rich did—Thomas More still deserved his execution.

God's Bestseller, then, is a sobering reminder that the old passions of the Reformation can reignite, even in an ecumenical age. In a preface to a collection of Tyndale's works published forty years ago, the scholar F. F. Bruce wrote:

> It gives us no pleasure today to contemplate two great and good Englishmen like Tyndale and More, men of principle who were both to give up their lives for conscience' sake, engaging in bitter polemic with each other. But, as they both believed, the issues for which they contended were issues in which men's souls were at stake; and they would have agreed on this at least, that the urbanities of modern theological debate betokened a failure to appreciate how serious the issues were.

What a pity if the collapse of urbanity in our own time should leave us only the bitter vituperation and not the energetic pursuit of truth.



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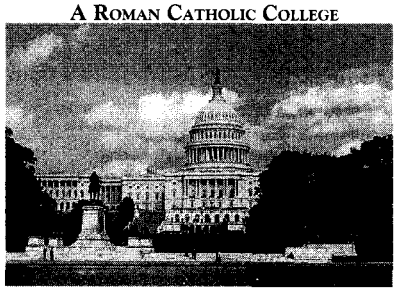

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Philosophy's Phantom Adversary

Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham. By Thomas L. Pangle. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 304 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by Ralph C. Hancock

Thomas Pangle, author of numerous acclaimed studies spanning the entire history of political philosophy from Socrates to today's various postmodernisms, is arguably the most prominent and accomplished of the many distinguished students of Leo Strauss (1899-1973), himself one of the most influential and controversial figures in postwar American intellectual life. In his important new book, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, Pangle ventures well beyond the great books of his discipline to devote himself to the study of the Hebrew Bible, as well as to ancient, medieval, and modern traditions of biblical commentary. His goal is ambitious—nothing less than to reinvigorate what he describes as "the encounter between political philosophy and the Bible" at the highest intellectual level.

Those familiar with Strauss' work will recognize Pangle's formulation, which assumes a fundamental tension between philosophical reflection (understood as the attempt to comprehend "the whole" using unassisted human reason) and biblical faith (treated as thoroughgoing submission of one's mind and heart to God's law). Pangle, like Strauss, claims that the ineradicable antagonism between the two parties is a fruitful one for both, as each illuminates the human possibility proposed by the other. Yet Pangle diverges from Strauss, who tended to leave his ultimate allegiance somewhat obscure, when he indicates that his primary concern is with showing how reason, on nothing but its own authority, can guide human life to a supremely satisfying end. In other words, Pangle sets out to take biblical religion seriously in order to expose it more effectively as an unsatisfactory alternative to what he describes approvingly as "Socratic rationalism."

According to Pangle, the encounter between political philosophy and the Bible is possible because both address a common core of our humanity. Reason and biblical faith agree that a "fully human life can and ought to be guided solely by the manifest Truth." They also agree that the primary theme of our interest in truth is the question of "justice or righteousness." As Pangle writes, "It is in regard to the right and the good . . . that political philosophy and scriptural piety have the fullest basis for a convergence," just as it is their very different responses to moral phenomena that ultimately lead them to fundamental and irreconcilable disagreement.

In order to illuminate this rivalry, Pangle proposes to begin at the beginning, with the book of Genesis. He presents a serious and careful philosophical commentary on the Hebrew text, including a sustained conversation with the most notable authorities of the Jewish and Christian traditions, as well as with modern critical scholarship and philosophical-literary reflection. Pangle's interlocutors include the Talmud, Maimonides, and Abravanel; Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Milton; Spinoza, Locke, and Bayle; Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Leo Strauss and Leon Kass.

Passing over Pangle's masterful and engaging discussions of these figures—not to mention his thoughtful and provocative reflections on such important topics as the differing accounts of the origins of the universe in the Bible and Greek philosophy—we find the heart of the book in the chapter on "Creation and the Meaning of Good and Evil." Pangle there presents with exceptional clarity the classic puzzles surrounding the nature of sin and divine justice in the Bible, and he makes every effort to propose rationally intelligible solutions. For example, Pangle discerns the germ of biblical sin in the serpent's appeal to Eve's capacity for envy, which reveals a nascent longing for autonomy that is equivalent to philosophical reason's "desire to govern one's own existence on the basis of one's own knowledge." As Abravanel argues, by yielding to the rationalistic desire, mankind abandoned the tree of life for the tree of knowledge.

But what is the alternative? Pangle claims that it involves radical obedi-

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ence, understood as self-conscious submission to God. But, he wonders, is such a way of living "possible, or even conceivable as coherent?" Judging from the highly compressed account presented here, Pangle's doubts are inspired by a suspicion that God demands the impossible—namely, that human beings knowingly renounce the guidance or rule of reason. As Calvin pointed out, such an act of self-conscious renunciation is most coherently understood as having been made possible by a new kind of cognition or knowledge, revealed by God, that trumps what human beings can discern on their own by the use of reason. But according to Pangle, the decision to accept or reject this revealed knowledge must itself be based on a still more fundamental "grounding knowledge of the utterly trustworthy goodness and justice of God." However we cut it, belief in God and the decision to obey Him must rest on human knowledge of what is good and true, a knowledge acquired, or at least interrogated, by rational reflection. But once this has been conceded, rationalism, with its insistence on the autonomy of the human intellect, has won the day.

Pangle returns to this theme toward the end of the book, in a chapter titled "Abraham at the Peak." Abraham's obedience to God in his willingness to sacrifice his son, the son of the promise, would seem to represent a singularly pure and clear manifestation of biblical righteousness. How are we to understand this obedience? Pangle finds "the deepest and most momentous puzzle of divine justice" to be implicated in the question of whether (as suggested by Hebrews 11:19) Abraham "was rationally calculating" as he set out for Moriah that he would not lose Isaac and the promise he represented. For if he was so reasoning, then "does not the whole drama become rather histrionic"? Either Abraham rationally pursued his own good—in which case, for what was he subsequently rewarded?—or "he was indeed sacrificing everything conceivably good for himself." But if the latter is the case, did he in another sense understand that by this sacrifice of the good he was "achieving the peak of human existence," and so seeking the good after all?

On Pangle's account, biblical faith terminates in the following impasse: Abraham's "unequaled deed" seems to represent the highest possibility of the human soul, a kind of nobility beyond nobility, a truly transcendent orientation of the mind and heart. But as we rationally scrutinize Abraham's possible motives, we seem to be left with this uninspiring alternative: either Abraham's deed is completely unintelligible, arbitrary, groundless, and effectively mad—the act of a man who deliberately does what he knows not to be good for him; or it must be explained in terms of rational and egoistic calculation (in terms of what was good for him). In either case, obviously, the biblical promise of transcendence proves to be a pure illusion.

OR DOES IT? There are, to say the least, reasons to doubt the solidity of Pangle's position—even, and perhaps especially—on its own terms. Consider his view of the origin and meaning of "philosophy" itself. While biblical piety, says Pangle, is rooted in the patriarchal family, philosophy, by contrast, springs from the ancient Greek city-state's "radical subordination of . . . most individual goods" to loftier civic ends; in other words, philosophy involves a purification or transcendence of the city's own purification or transcendence of "corporeal, familial, and mundane needs." That is, philosophy aspires to a divine self-sufficiency that grows out of, but ultimately leaves behind, civic and personal attachments.

This stands in stark contrast to biblical piety, which Pangle says "remains firmly within the bounds of our commonsense conviction" that moral responsibility is real. But it is not clear that philosophy can afford, any more than the Bible can, to dispense with some form of such a conviction. On Pangle's own account of philosophy's human ori-

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gins, the nobility of philosophy emerges as "the dimly held highest aspiration of the life of the city." But a world in which moral responsibility has been revealed to be rationally incoherent would seem to lack any ground for nobility, for a sense of "high" and "low." To the extent that Pangle holds philosophy to be noble, he draws on or relies on opinions derived from prephilosophical moral, familial, and civic life. But the validity of these is denied by philosophy, as Pangle defines philosophy.

Of course another possibility is that Pangle does not view philosophy as noble at all—and that he merely employs an exalted rhetoric to attract people, and especially young people, to the study of it. As their philosophical education proceeds, however, they will ultimately discover that such a philosophy's highest truth is that the world lacks any basis for judgments of "higher" or "lower"—and hence that the philosopher is merely a hedonist, pursuing the pleasure of autonomous reflection as the highest good.

But what an odd hedonist he is, this modern-all-too-modern Socrates who derives his pleasure from voiding the ethical, political, and religious content of life, savoring above all else his ever-renewed awareness of the groundlessness or incoherence underlying his attachment to other human beings. No wonder Pangle is so eager, not to say desperate, to sustain a sense of philosophy's seriousness by conjuring a worthy foe to battle. But, alas, like all conjured foes, the biblical piety contained in his book is a mere phantom of the real thing. Having failed to come to terms with the truly monstrous resignation of human goods required by his idea of philosophical autonomy, Pangle blinds himself to the genuine alternative to that idea. As Kierkegaard recognized when he described the "infinite resignation" of philosophy, biblical hope, as represented by Abraham, holds out the promise of holding fast to the beloved (Isaac), even as one prepares to sacrifice him to God.

In the end, Pangle has not thought through either what it would mean to abandon all hope, as his idea of philosophy demands, or to have faith in a God who is "concerned about the least things." And so he has staged for us not so much a battle of giants about the meaning of existence as a wrestling match between a falsely modest bully and a straw man of his own creation. We might have guessed who would win.

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The Melancholy Humanist

HOPE AND MEMORY: LESSONS FROM THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By TZVETAN TODOROV. Translated by David Bellos. *Princeton University Press. 337 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by Modris Eksteins

"HUMANITARIAN BOMBS," "ethical war," and "surgical strikes"—it is Orwellian Newspeak such as this, accompanying recent military action undertaken by Western liberal states, that incenses Tzvetan Todorov and fuels his latest work, *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. A historian, literary theorist, and moral philosopher, Todorov has increasingly taken part in contemporary controversies and has become a distinguished member of the current cohort of public intellectuals in France.

Originally published in French in 2000, the book is the first of a pair of his works that are provoking debate at the moment (the other is *Le nouveau désordre mondial*, published in September 2003 and not yet translated into English). Although Todorov would never defend the September 11 terrorists, the Taliban, or Saddam Hussein, let alone Tojo, Hitler, or Stalin, he cannot see how counterviolence, particularly when it is driven by staggering technological superiority, can promote the cause of democracy and freedom. War does more harm than good, he believes, no matter what the announced intentions of the warmakers may be.

A sense of moral outrage informs Todorov's recent efforts. Indeed, *Hope and Memory* may have been intended as a balance sheet for the previous century, but it turns at times into a polemical discourse on world affairs. Protect us, dear God, from the crusaders of righteousness, for they can be just as dangerous as the overt evildoers: that is Todorov's message and, as he sees it, the most important lesson we can learn from the twentieth century. The totalitarian impulse, which he considers to be the one truly original political development of that century, was promoted by zealots whose vision was of a better world. The motivation of

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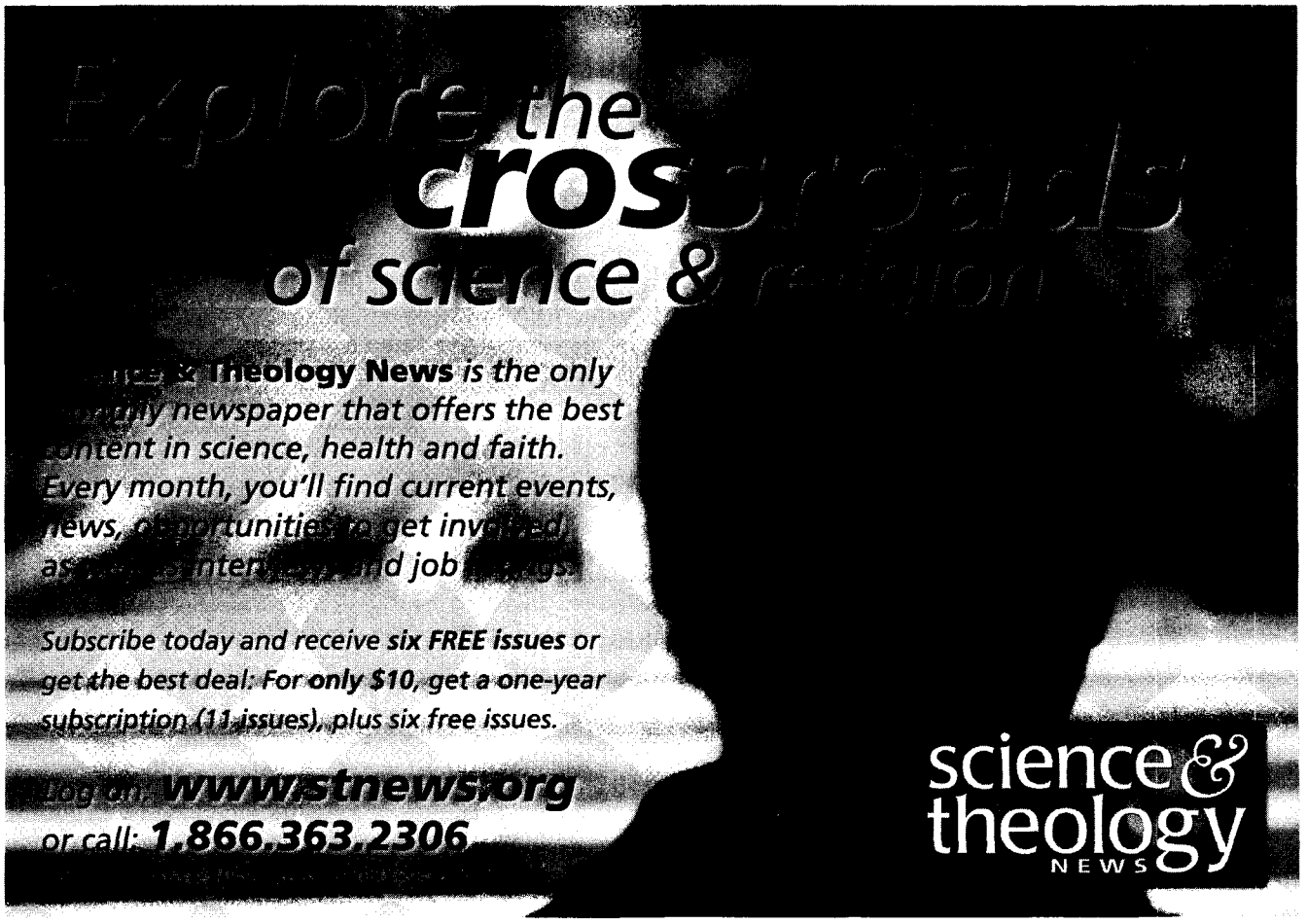
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some contemporary liberal democrats, however, he finds to be disturbingly similar. In a democracy the emphasis is supposed to be on individuals and their rights, on respect for the variety of human beings and for their potential, whereas in a totalitarian scheme the stress lies on the welfare of the collective enterprise. The trouble, for Todorov, is that the first urge can give way to the second—and in our bureaucratic-mechanistic age, it often does.

Todorov was born in Bulgaria in 1939 and grew up under Stalinist communism before moving to France in 1963, so his analysis of totalitarianism is understandably dotted with relevant personal reminiscences. In Paris he established himself as a historian interested in many areas, from eighteenth-century thinkers to modern literature to the fate of the Bulgarian Jews during World War II; more recently he has become known internationally as a major thinker in the humanities. (There will be a conference on his work this summer at the University of Sheffield.) He is director of research at France's prestigious Centre National de Recherche Scientifique and is married to the Canadian novelist Nancy Huston. This personal and professional trajectory suggests hope, but to read Todorov is to find this hope enveloped in humility and a tragic sense of history.

In Todorov's view, there can indeed be just wars. World War II, forced upon the world by Hitler's murderous intentions, was one such war. There are, however, no good wars. War brings to the fore, most dramatically, the propensity for evil as well as good in all of us, even the well-intentioned. He gives as an example the bombing of civilians by the Allies in World War II, culminating in the atomic annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombing of Belgrade in 1999 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter was being prepared as Todorov was writing the preface to this English translation) are more recent examples, according to Todorov, of the way venality and selective memory, dressed up in the guise of history and morality, can turn good and evil into blood brothers.

On the question of why this transformation happens, Todorov has little to say. His view of life, like that of most Europeans of a certain age who experienced the great European implosion of the twentieth century, is replete with melancholy and suffused with a determination to avoid any rash action. Todorov claims the individual human being as his point of departure and his terminus. Todorov calls himself a "critical humanist," and he believes that the major democratic states of the world must not only stake out the moral high ground but must stick to it, which he claims they have not done. The upshot, he fears, is the growing convergence of the two great impulses of the twentieth century, the totalitarian and the democratic.

Though much in this book is controversial, his analysis of totalitarianism may be the least contentious section. Here Todorov returns to some of the arguments of Hannah Arendt and Carl Friedrich, who stressed in the 1950s the similarities between communism and fascism. Subsequent writers of history and political science were more interested in the differences between these extremist ideologies, and this led implicitly to a categorization of Nazism as more demonic than Bolshevism, even in the latter's Stalinist variation. Todorov turns our attention once again to the monstrous parallels in these totalitarian systems, which were

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similar in their intent to reshape the world mechanically and hence brutally—to create a new man and a new order.

On this score Todorov is convincing, and his general discussion of the ideological components of democracy and totalitarianism is astute and enlightening. However, his suggestion that the twentieth century should be viewed as primarily a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism—as if there were a battle going on for our souls—is problematic. Todorov's formula suggests a degree of intention and agency that is difficult to discern in the events. Rather than as a conflict of ideas, the century might be viewed better as an unravelling of authority, a loss of precision and definition, along with all the attendant surprises that came with this process of deconstruction and decolonization.

I would argue that this process began with, or was at least greatly accelerated by, World War I. Launched in 1914 with supreme confidence on all sides, the war ended in an asphyxiating fog of doubt and regret. In the bewildering crisis that followed the war, communism and fascism emerged as radical initiatives to reformulate a world that was wallowing in self-pity, and they met with stunningly little active resistance. As the economic and social crisis mounted, democracy was confined, remarkably quickly, to the peripheries of European civilization. By the late 1930s, with Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, and even more so with the alliance of Stalin and Hitler, a new world order seemed to have come into being. The reluctant declaration of war by Britain and France in September 1939 in response to the German invasion of Poland was followed not by a determined military effort but by peace feelers.

Had Hitler not blitzed Rotterdam and then attacked France in the spring of 1940, the phony war might have remained just that. Had Hitler not turned on his confrère Stalin in June 1941 and then, in a foolhardy act of arrogance, declared war on the United States—and if the Red Army had not prevailed at Stalingrad and thus, ironically, saved the world for democracy and capitalism—who knows what would have happened? Contra Todorov, however, I would say that these developments, from 1914 on, were driven not by ideas per se but rather by a cruder dynamic—initially national self-assertion, then

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fear, and later an instinct for survival. Both of the world wars turned into horrific misadventures, not because of ideas but rather because of the bankruptcy of existing ideas. Authority and agency gave way to surprise and, in the collapse of structural restraints, to a primeval brutality.

That said, Todorov's chapters on the logic and fate of democracy and totalitarianism in the twentieth century are well worth reading in this fluent translation by David Bellos, as are his poignantly celebratory essays on a number of outstanding humanists (Vassily Grossman, Margarete Buber-Neumann, David Rousset, Primo Levi, Romain Gary, Germaine Tillion) who experienced, in different ways, the dehumanizing intentions of totalitarianism but were, in the process, strengthened in their humanity.

The chapter on Romain Gary may be the most interesting for an Anglo-American audience. Born in 1914 in Moscow and brought up in Vilna and Warsaw, Gary went to France to study law and then, when Hitler occupied Paris, fled to England and became a fighter pilot for the Free French under de Gaulle. But he was troubled by the "victory" in World War II, by the thought of the victims he had bombed, strafed, and conquered. He was sure that in the end the losers would win. After the war he became a diplomat and a prolific writer; his second wife was the American actress Jean Seberg—perhaps best known for her role in *Bonjour Tristesse*—whom he met while serving as French consul in Los Angeles.

As Todorov tells Gary's story, it becomes clear that for Gary, as for Todorov, good and evil are not easily separable categories; both are an integral part of us all. Gary, the offspring of a Jewish mother and an unknown Cossack father, was born in the wake of the pogroms in tsarist Russia at the turn of the century, and he felt that he had two souls in his breast, that of perpetrator and that of victim. By abandoning clear moral distinctions, Gary was condemned to writing tragic stories: "All that I've written is out of respect for weakness," he said in an interview. Thus Gary, despite being a Jew and an agnostic, admired Jesus, for Jesus to him embodied tolerance, respect, forgiveness—"Jesus is weakness." Gary's favored form of struggle was resistance, not war. The ground of humanity, he said, is love; and he savored the militancy of love. In his 1980 novel *Les cerfs-volants* ("The Kites"), the French pastor and his wife who protect Jews during the war represent the resistance of the weak. "You can't do better than that," Gary insisted. Todorov, following Gary, points out that to accept the notion that poetry died at Auschwitz, as Theodor Adorno postulated, is to accept the totalitarian fallacy. "If you take poetry and imagination away from people," Gary wrote, "all you're left with are hunks of meat."

A few years ago the former Communist Eric Hobsbawm, a man of conscience and utopian yearning, ended his elegant analysis of the twentieth century, *Age of Extremes*, with the word "darkness." His dream of social harmony and international goodwill had crumbled. Tzvetan Todorov's analysis of the same century-long crisis ends with the words "precious human beings." Todorov has no dream, only foreboding; yet in the midst of his doubt he wishes to cherish the survival of the human spirit. However flawed his understanding of what went wrong in the last century, Todorov's account serves as a useful caution against the dangers we face in this one.

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Order and the Ordinary

THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1845-1961. By IAN KER. *University of Notre Dame Press. 231 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by Matthew Boudway

The Catholic Revival in English Literature by Ian Ker is not, as its title suggests, the study of a literary movement. It is instead a collection of six free-standing essays about six very different writers: John Henry Newman, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, and Evelyn Waugh.

MATTHEW BOUDWAY *is Managing Editor of* FIRST THINGS.

Some of these men were friends; some were influences on one another; but as a group they had surprisingly little in common apart from their faith. Belloc, who knew Cardinal Newman as a student at his Oratory school in Birmingham, always preferred Newman's great rival, Cardinal Manning. Evelyn Waugh admired Chesterton the thinker but considered him a careless writer. (Waugh even toyed with the idea of rewriting *The Everlasting Man* to rescue it from its Fleet Street barbarism.) In verse, Hopkins was a modernist before his time, Belloc a Victorian behind his. Greene and Waugh were contemporaries at Oxford and knew each other well. But while they were respectful of each other's work, they had radically different temperaments and wrote radically different novels. Think of *The End of the Affair* and *A Handful of Dust*: both stories about adultery, and both *Catholic* stories about adultery. Aside from that, they could hardly be more different. In *A Handful of Dust*, Waugh treats adultery as something ugly and frivolous—more an expression of anomie than of lust. If it weren't such an efficient engine of destruction, the act itself would be hardly worth our notice. In Greene's novel, by contrast, adultery is anything but frivolous: it may be either the occasion of despair or the beginning of conversion, but whatever else it is, it is always a subject of fascination. Here Greene and Waugh were working two sides of the same street, but that is as close as they would ever get. By the end of their careers, they were living and writing in different worlds.

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So, then, why these six writers? In his preface, Ker suggests two principles of selection. The first has to do with the connection between what these men wrote and what they believed. Joseph Conrad, Edith Sitwell, and Siegfried Sassoon were all baptized Catholics. But in Ker's view, they cannot fairly be counted as Catholic writers, since Conrad had stopped practicing his faith before he began to write and Sitwell and Sassoon had stopped writing before they became Catholics. Such disqualifications seem fair enough, but Ker is just as fussy about those who were already, or still, Catholic when they were writing. In the work of a novelist such as Ford Madox Ford (described by Ker as a "very intermittent Catholic"), religion plays too small a role. Ford's novels often address the incidental attributes of English Catholicism, especially its connection with what Ker calls "feudal Toryism," but the essential drama of faith remains out of view. Among those who were truly Catholic writers according to Ker's rigorous definition—including Robert Hughes Benson and Maurice Baring—Ker's six stand out because they are still widely read and studied by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

But even when one knows why Ker chose not to include, say, Francis Thompson or David Jones, one is still left wondering why he decided to write about his finalists in a single book. Yes, both Hopkins and Greene were great writers, and surely both wrote *as* Catholics, but there the resemblance appears to end. For all the reasons mentioned above, as well as many others, most readers will have trouble thinking of these men as belonging to any kind of group.

To his credit, Ker makes no effort to conceal the striking differences among his subjects. He allows the writers to speak for themselves, quoting generously—sometimes excessively—from their best work. He doesn't say much about Belloc's deep strain of melancholy, but we find it anyway, in Belloc's own words. In a passage cited by Ker, Belloc wrote that it was only the faith that protected him from "the extreme of harm, final harm, despair." As a young man at art school, Chesterton had his own demons to contend with, but by the time he emerged as a critic and journalist, his most striking quality was an almost Dickensian cheerfulness. Of all the writers covered in this book, Chesterton and Belloc were the closest in sympathy and conviction; nevertheless, George Bernhard Shaw's "Chesterbelloc" would have been a creature with a violent mood disorder.

Allowing for the remarkable contrasts, Ker believes he can still trace at least one theme through the work of all six of his subjects, a theme that has little to do with the obvious "motifs" of English Catholicism such as "aestheticism, a love of ritual, ceremony, tradition, the appeal of authority, a romantic triumphalism, the lure of the exotic and foreign, a preoccupation with sin and guilt." What Ker discovers instead is a common

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concern for the "sheer ordinariness" of Catholic Christianity, the everyday "matter-of-factness" of its sacraments and sacramentals. Whereas Protestantism was for these writers a religion of words and inchoate dispositions, the Catholic "Thing" was a religion of hard facts and regular practices, a religion that offered definition in place of Protestant sentiment.

Ker is best known as a Newman scholar, and so it is not surprising that he sees this theme most clearly through the prism of Newman's genius. It was history and theology that had first drawn Newman to the Catholic Church. Even as an Anglo-Catholic, he knew little about Roman Catholic practices and made a point of avoiding Catholics themselves. As Ker writes, "In Newman's case . . . the discovery of Catholicism was a consequence rather than a cause of conversion." What Newman discovered in his new Church was a religion that was never off-duty and never afraid of vulgar piety. In the Catholic cultures Newman saw after he was received into the Church, religion was not merely part of one's daily routine; it was the ground of that routine, something confidently, unpretentiously taken for granted. In *Difficulties of Anglicans*, a set of lectures written just after his conversion and addressed to the Anglo-Catholic community he had left behind, Newman describes the scene outside a Catholic church during a fiesta:

> The *chef d'oeuvre* of the exhibition is the display of fireworks to be let off as the *finale*. "How unutterably profane!" again you cry. Yes, profane to you . . . profane to a population which only half believes; not profane to those who, however coarse-minded, however sinful, believe wholly. . . . They gaze, and, in drinking in the exhibition with their eyes, they are making one continuous and intense act of faith.

This was to be contrasted with the delicacy of Anglican ritual, in which doctrinal insecurities were disguised with elevated language and self-conscious displays of solemnity:

> Since, too, they have no certainty of the doctrines they profess, they do but feel they *ought* to believe them, and they try to believe them, and they nurse the offspring of their reason, as a sickly child, bringing it out of doors

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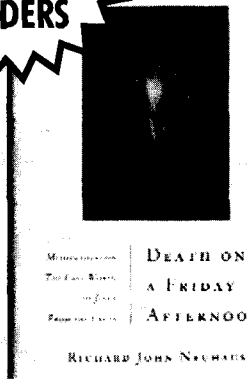

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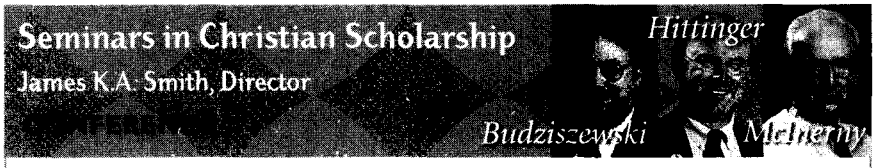
> only on fine days. . . . So they keep the exhibition of their faith for high days and great occasions, when it comes forth with sufficient pomp and gravity of language, and ceremonial of manner. Truths slowly totter out with Scripture texts at their elbow, as unable to walk alone. Moreover, Protestants know, if such and such things *be* true, what *ought* to be the voice, the tone, the gesture, and the carriage attendant upon them. . . . They condemn Catholics, because, however religious they may be, they are natural, unaffected, easy, and cheerful in their mention of sacred things; and they think themselves never so real as when they are especially solemn.

Here is a side of Newman that rarely gets much attention. The great defender of traditional liturgy could also be its critic when he thought the fog of incense was merely hiding a vacancy at the altar. And the most elegant prose stylist of the Victorian era had no time for lofty language if it was used as a brake on popular devotion.

Ker argues that it was the language of Catholic popular devotion—in particular the language of litanies—that helped Hopkins bring English verse back into contact with everyday speech. Similarly, it was the common duties of the Catholic priesthood that inspired so much of his religious imagination. For Hopkins, the priest was above all a kind of craftsman. Unlike "the amateur, educated, gentlemanly Anglican clergyman" (Ker's phrase), the Catholic priest was a classless professional with a job to do, a job that involved his hands as much as his voice. In "Felix Randal," the sacraments of penance and last rites are as physical as the farrier's old labor and the illness that ends it.

This notion of Catholicism as a solid, objective religion—and of Protestantism as a prison of introspection—reappears somewhat more crudely in the work of both Belloc and Chesterton. Belloc believed, with Cardinal Manning, that all human conflicts were ultimately theological, and that the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism in particular was a disagreement about the importance of definition. According to Belloc, Protestants disliked the idea of definition in religion because it reminded them of limitation and constraint. But as Chesterton would argue, limitation was a necessary condition of all beauty. "Art is limitation; the essence of every picture is the frame. . . . The artist loves his limitations:



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they constitute the *thing* he is doing."

Again, in Greene's "Catholic" novels, it is always a theological definition that generates the most painful dilemmas. Scobie, the protagonist of *The Heart of the Matter*, can't go to Mass with his wife because she will see that he isn't receiving communion. He can't receive communion because he is cheating on her and so is in a state of mortal sin. But he refuses to go to confession unless he knows he is prepared to end the affair. His mistress, who is not a Catholic, asks him why he doesn't just "go and confess everything now? After all, it doesn't mean you won't do it again."

> "It's not much good confessing if I don't intend to try. . . ."
>
> "Well then," she said triumphantly, "be hung for a sheep. You are in—what do you call it?—mortal sin? now. What difference does it make?"
>
> He thought: pious people, I suppose, would call this the devil speaking, but he knew that . . . this was innocence. He said, "There *is* a difference—a big difference. . . . *Now* I'm just putting our love above—well, my safety. But the other—the other's really evil. It's like the Black Mass, the man who steals the sacrament to desecrate it. It's striking God when he's down—in my power."
>
> She turned her head wearily away and said, "I don't understand a thing you are saying. It's all hooey to me."
>
> "I wish it were to me. But I believe it."
>
> She said sharply, "I *suppose* you do. Or is it just a trick?"

"Striking God when he's down—in my power": this is powerful language but perverse theology, as Greene must have known. But he seems to have believed it was also a peculiarly *Catholic* kind of perversion, not because it involves an exaggerated expression of guilt—Scobie, of course, has good reason to feel guilty—but because of its obsessive concern with definition. Scobie is not satisfied with the distinction between venial and mortal sin; he needs to weigh one mortal sin against another as if to chart the available degrees of damnation.

This is one of the passages George Orwell had in mind when he wrote that "when people really believed in Hell, they were not so fond of striking graceful attitudes on its brink."

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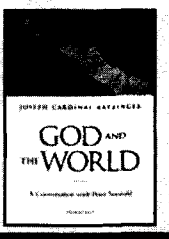

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Orwell was on to something, for there does seem to be an element of fantasy in Scobie's words, whether it's a lunatic's fantasy or just that of a spiritual malingerer. Ker's book invites the reader to assume that "matter-of-factness" and a devotion to definition are always two aspects of the same quality. In fact, they often fall on opposite sides of the ledger. From the point of view of orthodox Catholic theology, as from Orwell's very different point of view, the problem with Scobie's speculations is that, while they are quite well defined, they are not at all matter-of-fact: his desire for definition has lurched into a kind of moral insanity. More damaging to the novel, it is not always clear to the reader why—or whether—Scobie is willing to stake his life on this fantasy. We *suppose* he believes what he is saying, but we can never banish the worry that he is tricking himself, as well as everyone else. In the end, he imagines he can help both his wife and his mistress by committing suicide.

The distinction between the definite and the ordinary is an important one. It was of special concern to both Newman and Chesterton, though they approached the problem from slightly different angles. Chesterton liked to talk about it as the difference between rationalism and reason, by which he meant common sense. With greater clarity and precision, Newman had described rationalism as the insubordination of reason itself. Ker is familiar with the question as it arises in Newman's theory of knowledge, but, curiously, he never mentions it in this collection. *The Catholic Revival in English Literature* is a useful addition to the study of the six writers it covers. All of it is elegantly written and most of it carefully argued. Still, it would have been a better book if Ker had resolved, or at least explored, this tension in one of its unifying themes.

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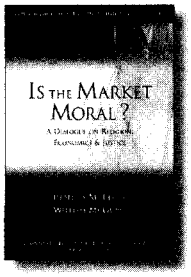

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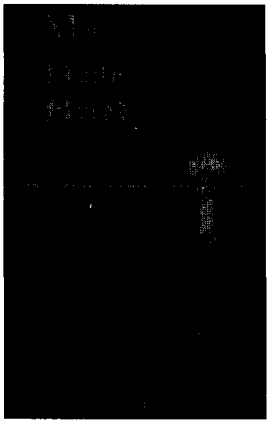

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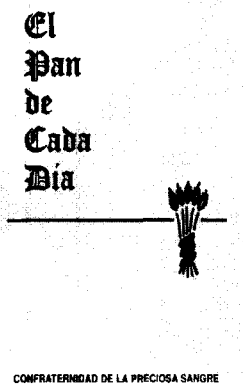

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Briefly Noted

A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920. By Michael McGerr. *Free Press. 395 pp. $30.*

When historians get ambitious, they often get into trouble. In *A Fierce Discontent*, Michael McGerr has gathered an impressive amount of information about the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century. (The date in his subtitle is puzzling: the origins of Progressivism are imprecise, but no one has ever traced them back to 1870.) He does not ignore political and economic developments, but he pays special attention to social issues, including, as he says in his preface, "the transformation of gender relations, the regeneration of the home, the disciplining of leisure and pleasure, and the establishment of segregation." But it is precisely here that his troubles begin. He has intermittently interesting things to say about all of these things, but about none of them does he establish his thesis—which is that Progressivism was a radical and utopian project. On his own evidence, Progressives neither accomplished nor attempted what he says they did. Most of them were not radicals on gender relations or household arrangements, and they most certainly did not establish segregation (it had started well before them and was in any case not something peculiar to them). As for "the disciplining of leisure and pleasure," it is hard to know, after the author's obscure analysis and bewildering backing and forthing, just what precisely he has in mind. On political topics he is more conventional and more sensible: the Progressives sought to control big business and to end class conflict. But his key analytical model here, presented as a novel insight—that Progressivism was a movement of the middle class caught between perceived threats from the upper class above and the laboring and farming classes below—has been a commonplace of historiographical analysis since the 1950s. Then there is the tacked-on conclusion: that all of American politics, ever since the Progressives, has been a dispiriting and disappointing enterprise, precisely because, for better and worse, it has not lived up to the Progressives' utopian dreams. But that makes no sense, neither as to what the Progressives—pragmatic reformers that they mostly were—had in mind nor as to what their widely various successors, many of them much more radical than they, dreamed of accomplishing. Advice to readers: garner the data, ignore the analysis.

—James Nuechterlein

The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America. By David Carlin. *Sophia. 421 pp. $24.95.*

"But I am not utterly without hope." Such are the very last words of the book, indicating the bleakness of this assessment of the present plight and probable future of Catholicism in America. Carlin is a sociologist, journalist, and sometime Democratic politician who here wears his sociologist hat in analyzing why a once robust American Catholicism has in the past forty years reached its current state of demoralization, decline, and disarray. The recent sex scandals play a relatively small part in the story and are represented as indicative of larger dynamics created by the mistakes in implementing Vatican II at a time when newly affluent and confident Catholics were engaging a culture that was in the process of self-destructing. Until the Council, anti-Protestantism gave Catholics a strong identity, and the renewal of that identity requires a new enemy. Carlin nominates "secularism" for that role. At the same time, Catholics should give up the delusion that they number sixty-five million or more in America, and the bishops should concentrate on equipping for the fight the less than half that number who are real Catholics. As an orthodox Catholic, the author does not want to dissent from the Church's teaching on ecumenism, while he believes that it has created a "denominational" mindset in which the Catholic Church is but one church among others. This, he contends, is fatal for the future of Catholicism. Against those who he thinks rely too complacently on Christ's promise that the gates of Hell will not prevail, Carlin points out that there is no promise that the Church in America

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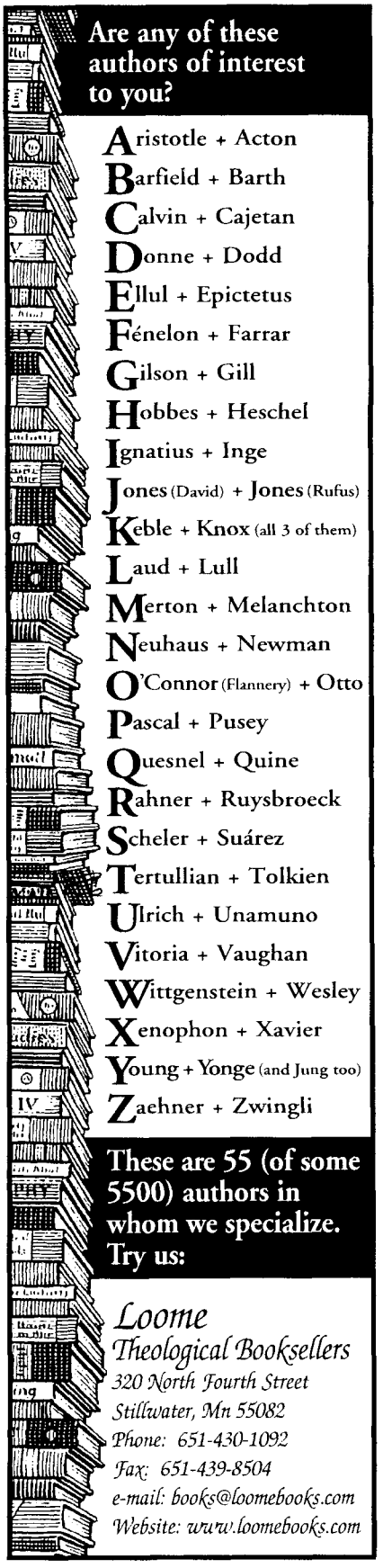

will not fail or be reduced to a small and defensive enclave devoid of cultural influence. The author provides no new documentation in support of his relentlessly grim essay, but the fair-minded reader will appreciate the frequent insights about the social and cultural currents that have contributed to Catholicism's now long-standing discontents. Missing from his assessment are the countersigns of renewal and the promising directions pointed by John Paul II which play such a large part in, for instance, George Weigel's *The Courage to Be Catholic*, which covers most of the same territory. Carlin describes himself as the Ghost of the Catholic Future who, like the Ghost of Christmas Future, says to Scrooge, "Such and such will happen, Ebenezer, if you do not amend your life." The such and such in this case is that "Catholicism will fail in America, or will at least be reduced to little more than a culturally irrelevant remnant." As is the case with jeremiads, *The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America* sometimes exaggerates and distorts, but it is, all in all, a cautionary tale that should be heeded by bishops, priests, theologians, and lay leaders responsible for the future of Catholicism in America. That future, however, will require leadership that is able to muster a sense of promise and possibility that is not limited to being "not utterly without hope."

NEVER AGAIN? THE THREAT OF THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM. By ABRAHAM H. FOXMAN. *HarperSanFrancisco. 305 pp. $24.95.*

In his foreword, Elie Wiesel says this book "is written with understandable urgency." That is a great understatement. In fact, it is a scissors-and-paste job of outrages real and imagined in the service of a screed that displays the Anti-Defamation League and its director Abraham Foxman as reckless alarmists who play fast and loose with the truth. Page after page, Mr. Foxman fights bigotry with bigotry, innuendo, and outright falsehood. Large sections portray contemporary anti-Semitism as a phenomenon of the right, with a full chapter given to a vicious caricature of "the religious right," when in fact anti-Israel and overtly anti-Jewish passions today are more than equally on the left. Foxman lists William F. Buckley, Jr. and Al Sharpton side by side as people who are to be carefully watched for their "latent anti-Semitism." Anybody familiar with Mr. Buckley's lifelong effort to extirpate anti-Semitism from the conservative movement will recognize the slander. Christians who honor the Jewish dead of the Holocaust are "making them into honorary Christian martyrs—as if forcibly converting them after death." Foxman grudgingly admits, "On the whole, John Paul II has been an important force for good where Jewish-Catholic relations are concerned." This comes after pages of smearing the Catholic Church and Christianity in general in a manner worthy of James Carroll, author of the thoroughly discredited *Constantine's Sword*. (The dust jacket includes a warm endorsement by Carroll.) Then, of course, there is a diatribe against Mel Gibson, who is falsely depicted as an eccentric who denies, inter alia, the legitimacy of the pope and whose film *The Passion of the Christ* "will try to revive the traditional charge of deicide against the Jews." Millions of children, says Foxman, who certainly had not seen the film when his book was written, "will absorb the lesson that Jews are 'Christ killers.' It's a belief that has already been responsible for countless deaths." And so Mr. Foxman's angry tract goes on and on. Anti-Semitism is always to be taken seriously, and the new strength of anti-Semitism in Europe is cause for deepest concern. Regrettably, this

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book might end up by persuading a reader who is not familiar with the history or literature that the enemies of anti-Semitism are infected by the same spirit of fanaticism and conspiracy-mongering that they claim to be combating. It is a great sadness.

Against Christianity. By Peter J. Leithart. *Canon. 154 pp. $13 paper.*

Readers familiar with Leithart's lively pieces in these pages will not be disappointed by this little book. Kierkegaard said he wanted to introduce Christianity to Christendom. Leithart proposes overthrowing Christianity on behalf of communal fidelity that aims at something like Christendom. In this he takes the side of Oliver O'Donovan against the likes of Hauerwas and Yoder who are, for all their antiliberal rhetoric, good liberals. Or so says Leithart. Written in an engaging and aphoristic style, *Against Christianity* is a splendid little dustup that will be of particular interest to those familiar with the main players and their arguments.

The First Christian: Universal Truth in the Teachings of Jesus. By Paul F. M. Zahl. *Eerdmans. 138 pp. $16 paper.*

The first Christian of the title is, according to the author, Jesus himself. Writing against the current theological grain, Zahl, who is an Episcopalian theologian and pastor, contends for a decontextualization of Jesus and his teachings. Too much attention, he believes, is now paid to the Jewish and particularistic aspects of Jesus at the expense of universal truths, the chief of which is that all are called to repentance. A short and provocative book reminiscent of Kierkegaard in substance, if not style, and emphatically unsympathetic to Catholicism.

Our Fathers: The Secret Life of the Catholic Church in an Age of Scandal. By David France. *Broadway. 672 pp. $26.95.*

The author covered the sex abuse crisis for *Newsweek* and has produced a big book, mainly about people and events in Boston, that will hold the attention of readers interested in a journalistic account that tries to be fair-minded, although it is not untouched by moments of legitimate, indeed necessary, outrage. Despite the subtitle, no secrets are revealed that have not been in the headlines.

Running from the Devil: A Memoir of a Boy Possessed. By Steve Kissing. *Crossroad. 256 pp. $22.95.*

A quirky account of a Catholic boyhood in Cincinnati in the 1970s, turning on the author's seizures, which he took to be visitations by Satan. This is not another Catholic horror story of sadistic knuckle-rapping nuns but a basically affectionate tale of the religious imagination running wild through the wildnesses of growing up. The author concludes that growing up Catholic was, all in all, a blessing. Definitely worth a look.

Intruding Upon the Timeless: Meditations on Art, Faith, and Mystery. By Gregory Wolfe. *Square Halo. 172 pp. $9.99.*

A collection of brief essays by the editor of *Image*, a distinguished journal of religion and the arts. A nice mix of the whimsical, provocative, and devout, as befits the variegated subject.

On the Priesthood: Classic and Contemporary Texts. Edited by Matthew Levering. *Rowman & Littlefield. 148 pp. $19.95 paper.*

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to time, feel beleaguered or bewildered about what it means to be a priest.

A KEY TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE EUCHARIST. By DOM ANSCAR VONIER. *Zaccheus Press. 196 pp. $12.95 paper.*

A reprint of a popular 1920s book by a British author who was part of that glowing era of Catholic letters. Avery Cardinal Dulles says this "is one of the few classics in Catholic theology composed in English." It also carries a recommendation by Richard John Neuhaus and a preface by Peter Kreeft. And, if it matters, this lowly reviewer found it as fine a reflection as they say it is.

THE SERENITY PRAYER: FAITH AND POLITICS IN TIMES OF PEACE AND WAR. By ELISABETH SIFTON. *Norton. 367 pp. $26.95.*

The serenity prayer composed by Reinhold Niebuhr, now most commonly associated with Alcoholics Anonymous, is the hook for an effusively admiring biographical memoir by Niebuhr's daughter, a New York editor. Regrettably, the book will likely to do little to revive interest in the impressive thought of a man who helped shape American religion, culture, and politics over more than three decades, providing a "Christian realist" alternative to Marxist socialism in the 1930s and to religious pacifism in the years leading up to World War II. In Sifton's telling, however, "the ambiguities of history" (a favorite trope of Niebuhr's) are reduced to good liberals vs. bad conservatives, good liberal Protestants vs. bad fundamentalist Protestants, and all good people vs. the absurdities of the Catholic Church. Yet for readers of a certain age the book will undoubtedly provide nostalgic pleasures recalling the time when there was a Liberal Protestant Establishment and Reinhold Niebuhr was its prophet.

THE CATHOLIC REVOLUTION: NEW WINE, OLD WINESKINS, AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. By ANDREW GREELEY. *University of California Press. 236 pp. $24.95.*

Father Greeley—sociologist, novelist, and, as he likes to say, a general purpose loudmouth Irish priest—offers a once-over-scathingly account of what has happened to Catholicism in the last forty years, and what might be done to fix it. Greeley is appropriately critical of authoritarian patterns of leadership, casually dissenting on aspects of the Church's teaching (notably on sexuality), delightfully acerbic on the terrorism perpetrated by liturgists, and pastorally wise about things that can be done to make parish life more winsomely reflective of what he likes to call the Catholic imagination.

LEFT ILLUSIONS: AN INTELLECTUAL ODYSSEY. By DAVID HOROWITZ. *Spence. 450 pp. $29.95.*

A megacollection of writings from over four decades of intense political-ideological engagement. The author of the acclaimed memoir *Radical Son* is described as a "convert" to conservatism and, as in his Marxist days as a leader of the New Left, he continues the policy of taking no prisoners. Horowitz, however, also believes in engaging opposing views—sometimes if only to demolish them—and this book provides an informed overview of many of the most important ideological clashes informing and deforming our political culture. The question Horowitz relentlessly asks is, Whose side are you on? Those who want to take their stand here but also a little bit over there, who identify intelligence with complexification, and who believe truths are never simple would benefit by reading Horowitz but probably won't. Too bad.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

PASSIONS SURROUNDING *THE PASSION*

"An Open Letter to the Jewish Community" was issued by the Catholic League a few weeks prior to the release of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. I have problems with aspects of the letter, but it spoke some hard and necessary words about a few Jewish leaders who are way out of line in their defamation of Mr. Gibson, the film, and the Christians of America. With the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center providing the lead, outrageous claims have been made, also in the major media: that the movie will provoke pogroms against Jews; that Christians are at least latent anti-Semites and the movie will ignite their barely repressed hatred; that Mr. Gibson denies the Holocaust; and on and on. There has never been a pogrom in America and no sensible person thinks there is any danger of there ever being one. On the contrary, never in history have Jews been as secure, successful, and accepted as they are in America. This is underscored by many Jewish scholars, and most recently by Jonathan Sarna in his important new book from Yale University Press, *American Judaism: A History*.

Of course there has been anti-Semitism, and there still is on some far fringes, but the happy circumstance of Jews in this society is not despite but because this is America, a country in which, not at all incidentally, nine-tenths of the people identify themselves as Christians. To suggest that Christian Americans are latent anti-Semites is a vile slander. It is complained that in his *Reader's Digest* interview Mel Gibson declined to say that the death of Jews in the Holocaust is the worst thing that ever happened in history. One Jewish leader voices outrage that, in speaking of the Holocaust, Mr. Gibson mentioned other great tragedies such as the famine in the Ukraine under Stalin. He compared a mere famine to the deaths of six million Jews! A little perspective is in order here. In Stalin's politically engineered famine, as many as ten million Ukrainian men, women, and children were starved to death. The demand is that we not pay too much attention to that lest it detract from the unique horror of Jews killed in the Holocaust.

In important respects, the Holocaust was unique, but such exercises in competing victimologies are both irrational and morally repugnant. In history, and especially in the last century, there have been horrors enough to go around. It is perfectly understandable that for many Jews there is nothing comparable to the Holocaust, as for Armenians there is nothing comparable to the genocide of 1915. But most people are neither Jews nor Armenians. They can empathize and learn, and they do, but they cannot really know the soul-shattering horror experienced by those whose primary identity is formed in solidarity with one category of victims rather than another. This reality may be especially hard to accept for those Jews for whom the Holocaust is the core of what it means to be Jewish. This does not include all Jews by any means. Rabbi David Novak has said, "I do not get up in the morning to curse Hitler but to praise God."

If one must speak of the worst of history's horrors, Christians have no choice but to say it was the killing of the Son of God. Jesus, the first-century Jew, was

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condemned by the religious leaders of his people as a false Messiah, and they contrived to have him killed by the Romans. Jesus was a Jew, his mother was a Jew, his apostles were Jews, the leaders who opposed his death were Jews. It is the Jewish story of the redemption of the world. That is what Christians believe, and it is worth noting that when some have tried to de-Judaize the story—as some have done, from Marcion to the "German Christians" under Nazism—it has been very bad for Jews. Christians must tell the story of salvation truly, which means telling it Jewishly. "Salvation is from the Jews." Many a Jew has expressed the wish that God had chosen a different people. But so it was and so it is.

In America over the last century there has been unprecedented progress in Jewish-Christian understanding. Not just at the level of intercommunal relations, but in exploring our inescapable entanglement in discerning the purposes of the God of Israel. In telling the story of Jesus and his death, the Catholic Church has developed detailed homiletical and catechetical guidelines for the depiction of the Jews of the time. A Jewish partner in the dialogue tells me that Gibson's film does not conform to those guidelines. I think he is probably right, but it should be remembered that this film is not produced by the Catholic Church. Mr. Gibson, while a Catholic, is an artist and a craftsman, and his work should be judged on those grounds. In the film that I saw in advance screening, the rendition of Christ's passion is eminently defensible—biblically, historically, and theologically. There is nothing anti-Semitic about it, and those who are making reckless claims to the contrary are only stirring up ugly mischief that nobody needs.

FT

THE BISHOP OF BRAY

Heresy is better than schism, says the Episcopal bishop of Virginia. Bishop Peter J. Lee had for many years been viewed as a moderate, tilting to this side or that in order to keep his little barque afloat. Virginia is a wealthy and important diocese in the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA), and for twenty years Lee was thought to personify the archetypically Anglican knack for tasteful ambiguity that precludes the vulgar dialectic of yes or no. "So, is it both/and or either/or, your Grace?" "Well, surely we must say it's both, mustn't we?" It's a talent developed to an art form in the Anglican tradition. Recall the stout and uncompromising law of the Vicar of Bray in a time when men were losing their livings and, sometimes, their heads over questions of principle:

> And this is law, I will maintain,
> Unto my dying day, sir,
> That whatsoever king shall reign,
> I will be the Vicar of Bray, sir!

But then the Bishop of Virginia up and voted at the General Convention of ECUSA in Minneapolis to seat the Bishop of New Hampshire, despite the latter's having deserted his wife and family in order to live with his male partner and celebrate what he describes as their sacramental sex. Now parishes in Virginia are up in revolt and withholding hundreds of thousands of dollars from the diocesan budget. What got into the exquisitely moderate Bishop Lee to prompt him to take such a controversial position? I don't know, but from what he says I expect he does not think that he has violated the law of the Vicar of Bray. The controversial position among Episcopal bishops, certainly the minority position, would have been to uphold historic Christian morality. ("Episcopal bishops" is such an odd phrase. Episcopal *episcopoi*, as though to insist that they really are bishops.)

In any event, the bishop explained his rationale at the annual meeting of the diocesan council. "If you must make a choice between heresy and schism, always choose heresy. For as a heretic you are only guilty of a wrong opinion. As a schismatic, you have torn and divided the body of Christ. Choose heresy every time." This met with applause from most of the assembly. The bishop offers a deeply interesting rationale. It would seem to assume that the schismatic position would have been to oppose the consecration of an openly gay man who is living and teaching in defiance of historic Christianity and even of the official position of ECUSA, if that still is the official position. Certainly he is saying that Virginia parishes that reject the sodomite heresy are acting in a schismatic way. What, he appears to be saying, is a little heresy among friends? And, beyond friendship, the solvency of the diocese is at stake. "I would remind you," said the bishop, "that Christian communities often consist of solidarities not of our choosing." Indeed. Jesus said, "You have not chosen me. I have chosen you." ECUSA has chosen you to pay your parochial dues. The resisters should not feel that going along with heresy compromises their faith. As the bishop put it, "Our faith teaches that people with who [sic] we differ often have important truths to teach us." Indeed again. And shame on Augustine—to cite but one example—for not letting himself be instructed by Pelagius. (Actually, Augustine did learn from Pelagius, and what he

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learned most importantly is that the teaching of Pelagius was incompatible with the faith.)

Also noteworthy is the bishop's solicitude for the unity of ECUSA, or maybe just of the Virginia diocese, while ignoring the schism precipitated in the worldwide Anglican communion by the action of the General Convention. He strikes a touchingly parochial and distinctively Episcopalian note in referring to the two million-member ECUSA as "the body of Christ." "If you must make a choice between heresy and schism, always choose heresy." In fact, we are never in a position of having to make that choice, since heresy is by definition schismatic. Choosing heresy in order to avoid schism is a guaranteed formula for ending up with both.

FT

Editorial Secrets Revealed

Paul Johnson says an important part of it in his introduction to *The Norman Podhoretz Reader* (Free Press, 479 pp., $35). Of Podhoretz he writes, "He is a bit of a prophet himself, gritty and angular, nonconformist and egregious, a purveyor of harsh and often unwelcome truth." That is Podhoretz the political and cultural polemicist or, as his enemies prefer, the ideologist—and my friend Norman provides ample grist for the mills of both admirers and detractors who see him only in that mode. The *Reader*, however, contains much from the 1950s to the present that reveals other sides of the man: the literary critic, the observer of manners, the amateur (in the best sense) theologian, the autobiographer of an inexhaustible gratitude that someone like him could become who he is. (His 1967 book, *Making It*, scandalized many by its confession—and accusation—regarding the dirty secrets of ambition and hubris in the service of getting to the top. Almost all reviewers missed the wonder and gratitude that, admittedly, are less muted in his later autobiographical writing.)

The *Reader* is a gift to first-time readers and rereaders alike. Among the many excerpts on offer, I had not read or had read and forgotten—sorry, Norman, that is possible—an essay titled "In Defense of Editing." Written when he was only six years into his thirty-five-year tenure as editor of *Commentary*, the essay addresses questions pertinent to any magazine of ideas, and not least this one. Podhoretz writes, "Most people, I imagine, if they think about it at all, think that the job of an editor is to pick and choose among finished pieces of work which have been submitted to him and deliver them to the printer; that is to say, he acts as a middleman between individual authors and an expectant public." Some people no doubt do think that. Certainly some authors think the editor should be no more than that. In my experience, however, more people hold the editors responsible for every word published. In (I am glad to say) the relatively infrequent instances of readers asking that their subscriptions be cancelled, that is always the case. (I've always rather liked William F. Buckley's response: "Cancel your own damn subscription." As a priest, I could never say that, but my colleagues can.) It is true that the editors are responsible. What is not understood is that they do not necessarily endorse every idea or argument they think deserving of consideration. That touches on what might be called the character of a magazine, if indeed it has a character.

"Every magazine that deserves the name," Podhoretz writes, "has a character, a style, a point of view, a circumscribed area of concern, a conception of how discourse ought to be conducted; if it lacks these things, it is not a magazine but a periodical anthology of random writings." We receive many unsolicited submissions; all are welcome, all are considered, relatively few are published. Phrases such as "Not for us" or "Unsuitable" or "Doesn't quite work" often accompany letters of rejection. Such phrases, says Podhoretz, "are used partly to soothe the wounded feelings of authors, but there is a truth in them by which magazines live or die." Sometimes authors write back demanding to know why their article was unsuitable or why it doesn't quite work. See Podhoretz on what every magazine that deserves the name has.

I know that sounds somewhat arbitrary, but there it is. *De gustibus* there is endless disputation. It is not only a matter of taste, however, as important as taste certainly is. It is a matter of coherence of argument and grace of style. The question repeatedly asked in editorial meetings here is, "Does it advance the argument?" Does it have something fresh to say, and does it say it freshly? Although, as a general rule, an author who thinks clearly writes clearly, there are sometimes good arguments badly written. In such cases, we ask whether it is worth a "typewriter job." That is a phrase introduced to this shop by Midge Decter, Norman's wife, during the wonderful years she was with us. A typewriter job means that you basically rewrite the piece. If the author will hold still for it. And of course it entails an enormous investment of editorial time and effort.

The great Methodist theologian and ethicist Paul Ramsey was a famously clear thinker and notoriously

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bad writer. When I was with another publication, I used to edit his prose, and it was almost always a typewriter job. With a high degree of regularity, Ramsey was very pleased with the result and would triumphantly display the published article as evidence against his reputation, of which he was keenly aware, of being a bad writer. I would bite my tongue, knowing that a requisite virtue in an editor is humility, a quality on which I am still working, with slight discernible success, or so colleagues and authors say.

For instance, in this shop we never ask the last of the questions in Podhoretz's list of those questions editors regularly ask: "Is it right for *us*? Can it be made right for us? How? Will the author be willing to revise? Are we being unfair or too rigid? Should we perhaps publish the piece more or less as it is? Are we perhaps a little crazy?" I don't think Norman ever asked the last question either. But we do ask how the author will react to our editing. As Podhoretz writes, "Seeing the edited manuscript, the author, as likely as not, is more than a little outraged. This is, after all, *his* article; he takes responsibility for it; it is to appear under his name. By what right does anyone presume to tamper with it?" He then adds, "On the other hand, some authors, curiously enough including many who write very well, are often grateful for editing." That is also our experience. A few good writers resist any editing, but more typically good writers appreciate good writing and welcome suggestions on how the very good might be made even better.

At *Commentary* Norman was a line-editor, meaning he massaged manuscripts line by line. Most of that is done here by Damon Linker and John Gray. Norman describes well that undercelebrated craft: "It takes a great deal of work, an enervating concentration on detail, and a fanatical concern with the bone and sinew of the English language to edit a manuscript—to improve an essentially well-written piece or to turn a clumsily written one into, at the very least, a readable and literate article, and, at the very most, a beautifully shaped and effectively expressed essay which remains true to the author's intention, which realizes that intention more fully than he himself was able to do." Or, I would add in some cases, was willing to take the time to do.

"Is it all worth it? Over and over again one asks oneself that question, tempted as one is to hoard some of the energy that goes into editing for thinking one's own thoughts or doing one's own writing." Podhoretz answers: "In the end an editor is thrown back, as any man doing any job faithfully must be, on the fact that *he* cares and that he can therefore do no other. He cares about the English language; he cares about clarity of thought and grace of expression; he cares about the traditions of discourse and of argument. It hardly needs to be said that even good editors will sometimes bungle a job and that bad editors invariably will, but it nevertheless remains true that the editorial process is a necessity if standards are to be preserved and if the intellectual life in America is not to become wholly compartmentalized and ultimately sterile in spirit."

Well, I'm not sure about that Luther-like "can do no other." And there is a touch of hyperbole in the notion that we editors are preserving civilization as we know it. It is an excusable hyperbole, however, and, pushed to the wall, I do believe we play some unspecifiable but not inconsiderable part in maintaining a measure of clear thinking and literary grace in a largely debased intellectual culture. In any event, it is what I believe I have been given to do, and in doing it I am probably doing less damage than were I doing something else. On a lighter note, Podhoretz ends his essay by remarking, parenthetically, that it was not edited. He adds, "Perhaps—I hope not—it should have been." In the years when I wrote with some frequency for *Commentary*, my pieces regularly emerged untouched by editorial hands. I'm sure they could have been improved. I do recall one instance in which I resisted Norman's proposed concluding sentence, but then relented. He was right. He usually is. Usually.

For hours of pleasure and provocation with one of the most spirited thinkers and writers of the last several decades, you might want to check out, or even buy, *The Norman Podhoretz Reader*.

FT

LOW EXPECTATIONS AND CATHOLIC PREACHING

Among all the qualities Protestants look for in their clergy, the one consistently rated highest is that he (or she) be a good preacher. With Catholics it is very different. First, they don't get to choose the priest or priests assigned them by the bishop, so there is not much point in drawing up a list of the qualities they're looking for. More important, the Catholic sensibility reflects a theology of the priesthood that accents the sacred office more than the talents of the person, or lack thereof. This is sometimes attributed to the "mystique" of the priesthood, but is more accurately understood as the mystery of the priest's participation in the priesthood of Christ. He acts *in persona Christi*. Personal qualities are not unimportant, but they are secondary. Among the most valued

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qualities, it would seem, is that the priest be holy, kindly, and approachable. It is not expected that he be a fine preacher, and there are many wonderful priests who are not.

Catholics go to church to be encountered by the Real Presence of Christ in the Mass, not to hear a sermon. If there is a well-crafted and well-delivered homily, that is a plus, and something of a surprise. It is only human that low expectations and low execution go together, the one reinforcing the other. Few will dispute the generalization that Catholics do not expect and (therefore?) do not get good preaching. Homiletically speaking, priests are under little pressure. Ten minutes of more-or-less impromptu "reflections" vaguely related to the Scripture lessons of the day, combined with a little story or personal anecdote, is "good enough." For weekday Masses, it is usually three or four minutes of even more impromptu remarks. The daily Mass sets the pattern; the Sunday homily is simply a few additional minutes of the same.

When I tell my Catholic confrères that in Lutheran seminary we were taught that every minute of a twenty or thirty minute sermon should be preceded by at least an hour of preparation, they respond with incredulity. In truth, I doubt that many Lutheran pastors keep to that regimen, but they know that the Sunday sermon is a thing, if not *the* thing, by which they will be judged by their people. The Catholic Mass is composed of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, but when Catholics speak of "going to Mass" it is chiefly the second they have in mind. The Liturgy of the Word is the preliminary to be endured on the way to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Of course, Word and Sacrament should not be pitted against one another. Since apostolic times, Christians have been called to come together for both. But the Word and, more specifically, the preaching of the Word has fallen upon hard times among Catholics.

It will be objected that the situation is much better than it was before the Second Vatican Council. Hilaire Belloc was among many who thought it an inestimable advantage of being Catholic that one did not have to listen to sermons. After the Council, a Sunday homily based on the lessons of the day has been mandatory, but the succeeding four decades have produced, it seems, little more than an observance of the letter of the law. The quality of homilies is a common complaint among Catholic lay people and would no doubt be much more common if they had much experience of good preaching. As one priest friend half-jokingly remarked in defense of homiletical mediocrity, "We must be careful not to raise their expectations."

Homiletical "Helps"

The sorry state of preaching is reflected in, and no doubt encouraged by, the pap that passes for devotional writing and "homiletical helps" among today's Catholics. My favorite was one I came across in the sacristy on St. Matthias' Day. Matthias, it will be remembered, was chosen to replace Judas among the Twelve. The little book of homiletical helps said the theme for the day was that it is natural to make mistakes; even Jesus made a mistake in choosing Judas.

Usually, however, it is not so much a matter of heresy as of banality. In my parish, Immaculate Conception in Manhattan, we use "Celebrating the Liturgy," the Mass guide published by Liturgical Press. The gospel reading for the "Second Sunday in Ordinary Time" is the wedding at Cana. (Incidentally, how can Protestants get along without the idea of purgatory as preparation for heaven? In the absence of a long stretch in purgatory, there would be no alternative to sending the liturgists responsible for defaming time as "ordinary" straight to that other place.) The Church's theological and homiletical tradition on the wedding at Cana is vast and wondrously rich. Augustine, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, and Thomas Aquinas all made marvelous connections between the water at Cana and the previous Sunday's baptism of Jesus, between this wedding and the anticipated wedding feast of the Lamb, between Cana and the mixing of wine and water in the chalice, and, above all, between this wine and the blood that was shed on the cross and is given in the Eucharist. The gospel reading is filled to the brim, like the jars at Cana, with invitations to the spiritual and theological imagination.

Here is the theme for the day proposed by "Celebrating the Eucharist": "For their own time and custom we can well imagine that the couple in this Sunday's gospel probably spent a proportionate amount of time preparing for their own wedding day. We identify with Mary's sensitivity in noticing that the wine was running short (this would surely spoil a perfect day!) and Jesus' sensitivity in keeping the miracle quiet (the focus was on the couple, not him!)." Do you suppose Miss Manners is writing for Liturgical Press? The banality deepens, however. We are told, "The purpose of the miracle wasn't to save the wedding couple's day or to draw attention to Jesus. The purpose runs deeper: the sign 'revealed Jesus' glory.'" So the miracle draws attention to the glory of Jesus without drawing attention to Jesus. One sympathizes with the priest who depended upon this vacuous incoherence for homiletical inspiration, and sympathizes even more with the people subjected to the resulting "reflection."

This, I am sorry to say, is more or less par for the

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course for "Celebrating the Liturgy," and "Celebrating the Liturgy" is, I am sorrier to say, better than most other Mass guides on the market. (Such Mass guides are commonly called "missalettes," producing, someone has remarked, homilies that are "sermonettes," and people who are "Christianettes.") My apologies for inflicting this upon you. It is simply that I sat down to work on Sunday's homily on the wedding at Cana and happened to notice the theme proposed by Liturgical Press. I admit to being easily distracted and easily provoked. Were it otherwise, there would be no Public Square each month. But now back to work on this homily, in the hope that it will not lower Catholic expectations even further. Some of the people will have read the stated theme in the Mass guide, so maybe I should work in something about the exquisite sensitivity exhibited by Jesus and Mary.

And a little story, preferably a funny one, never hurts. This one, too, is from my Lutheran days. Mrs. Schultz was most exceptional among Lutherans of German extraction in that she was a teetotaler. She objected also to the use of wine in the Lord's Supper and regularly argued the point with her pastor. Finally, the pastor was exasperated and said, "We've gone round and round on this, Mrs. Schultz, and you simply have to admit that Our Lord himself used wine when he instituted the Supper." "Ja, Ja, Pastor," said Mrs. Schultz, "and that's one thing I never liked about Jesus." There, that should make memorable the deeper lesson of the wedding at Cana: Be tolerant of those who take a nip from time to time. As the years go by, I'm getting the hang of Catholic preaching. St. Augustine would not have approved and Chrysostom would have been scandalized, but what did they know about sensitivity? They were hopelessly premissalette.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Medical concerns have been raised about the "morning after pill," but the *Christian Century* editorially opines that it's worth the risks. "The possible downside is offset by some distinct benefits. It seems to us a good idea to give women who wish to terminate a pregnancy the option of doing so at the very earliest—and morally preferable—stage rather than later. It's also a good idea to provide a method that reduces the total number of abortions." Unless, of course, terminating a pregnancy is morally indistinguishable from abortion.

■ Philip Hamburger's *Separation of Church and State*, published two years ago, has received a great deal of deserved attention and, for the most part, high praise (see FT, December 2000). Douglas Laycock, another distinguished scholar of the First Amendment religion clause, offers a sharp dissent in the *University of Chicago Law Review* (Fall 2003). In "The Many Meanings of Separation," Laycock contends that Hamburger's book—while providing massive and useful documentation of the ways in which separationism has been driven by anti-religious and, more specifically, anti-Catholic passions – deceptively limits "separation" to one meaning, namely, the "strict separationism" of, for instance, the 1948 *McCollum* decision with which the Hamburger book ends. Almost a half century later, Laycock argues, it is evident that the Supreme Court's construal of the religion clause is much more nuanced than Hamburger suggests. Laycock concludes: "If to some people separation means protection of religious activity from government, and to other people it means suppression or subordination of religious activity by government, then the phrase has no agreed core of meaning that will enable anyone to communicate. The phrase is deeply entrenched in American society and people will not quit using it. But the apparent lesson of Hamburger's book is that the phrase has no sufficiently agreed meaning to be of any use, and until we develop vocabulary that communicates distinct theories of separation, we should give up the phrase altogether. Thanks to Hamburger's careful history of actual usage, we now know that from the phrase alone, without an analysis of context, we have no idea what people mean by it." I'm not quite sure what to make of all this. I agree with Hamburger that, in the past and at present, the dominant use of "separation of church and state" in public discourse has aimed at limiting, muting, or excluding religious influence in our public life. I agree with Laycock that the most virulent forms of antireligious separationism, described in such detail by Hamburger, have not definitively triumphed. I also agree with Laycock that the "separation of church and state" also supports the freedom of religion from government interference. He is right to say that the phrase is deeply entrenched and will continue to be used until an alternative terminology gains currency. All of which leaves us with the observation that the phrase "the separation of church and state" is used in ways both hostile and friendly to religious freedom and, so long as it is with us, we must not tire of contending for its friendly use.

■ Apparently it's becoming the thing with rich kids who have lots of Jewish friends. They go to Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs and find the parties really cool.

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For example, Laura Jean of Dallas, whose parents are Methodist, had a really big bash, which the *Wall Street Journal* says "looked like a Bat Mitzvah, without the religion." Said Laura Jean, "I wanted to be Jewish so I could have a Bat Mitzvah. Having the party fulfilled that." More precisely, having the party fulfilled wanting to be Jewish in order to have a party. Don't blame the kids, but what are the parents, if they are thinking, thinking?

■ Robert Louis Wilken of the University of Virginia concludes his review of the book by saying that we are privileged to live in a time that can claim a historian of such distinction. That is a tribute offered by one master historian to another. The book is *The Rise of Western Christendom* and the historian is Peter Brown of Princeton (Blackwell, 625 pp., $29.95 paper). The book was first published in 1996 and this is called the second edition, but in fact it is so thoroughly updated and rewritten that it can be considered a new work. Brown is the author of many books on early Christianity and late antiquity, and is best known for his magnificent *Augustine of Hippo*, a biography. *The Rise* covers the period from 200 to 1000, the story of "the decline and fall" of the Roman Empire, the "invasion of the barbarians," and the final triumph of "Western Christendom." It is the story known to generations from Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a great book that was utterly wrongheaded in its time and is now impossibly outdated but is still much worth reading for the caustic elegance of its prose. Brown offers an alternative to two more recent historians: Christopher Dawson, who, in *The Making of Europe*, put Catholicism at the center of the constitution of a new civilization, and Henri Pirenne, who dismissed "the barbarian invasions" as a nonevent, contending that the empire did not fall but was sustained by the economic system of Mediterranean trade. In Brown's telling, there was no dramatic "fall" and no real "invasion" from the north but a slower and more ambiguous process of amalgamation between what was originally Roman with what was "Romanized" in a long period of interaction with the Franks and others who gradually moved from marginality to dominance. The book is especially strong in its depiction of the Eastern Empire based in Constantinople and the vitality of pre-Islamic Christianity in the Levant, and it dwells with loving attention on the early Irish-Scot Christianization of Britain centered in the holy island of Iona. Of popular accounts such as Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, Brown flatly states that "this is a myth which has no scholarly support." It is a myth that also obscures the true achievement of the Irish. "For what Irishmen and West Britons lacked in books, they more than made up for through the intensity and originality with which they read what books they had, and the zest with which they applied their reading to substantially new situations. The Irish did a lot more than 'save' the relics of classical civilization. They created something new." On the rise of Islam in the seventh century, Brown makes the interesting point that the initial tolerance toward Christians, Jews, and others reflected the original Arab belief that Islam was for Arabs, who were a kind of new chosen people. Only later was it asserted that obedience to the new revelation required the conversion or subjugation of all. Then there is the big question: What was it that held Christianity and, later, Christendom together? Brown answers with the rather clunky term "inter-connectivity," meaning that—from Syria to Constantinople to Iona to Armenia to Iceland—Christians shared the same sacred texts, essentially the same liturgy, and a form of episcopal governance harkening back to a shared memory, or imagined memory, of apostolic origins. Only with trepidation would I question Peter Brown but, if Christopher Dawson exaggerated the role of Rome, I suspect Brown is inclined to downplay it. There are other questions that might be raised, and Brown well knows that he has not written the last book on the subject, but the appropriate response to *The Rise of Western Christendom* is one of enormous gratitude. It is an astonishing story, told in a way that keeps general themes clearly in sight while lovingly attending to the particularities of people, practices, and beliefs. If the term multiculturalism is ever to be rescued from its current trivializations, it might be through engaging the intricacies of difference and sameness, of clashes and borrowings, of defeats and victories and new beginnings related by Peter Brown in *The Rise of Western Christendom*.

■ Precisely six years after the tumultuous visit by John Paul II, the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, visited Cuba. There are about a thousand Orthodox Christians in Cuba, and the patriarch was there to dedicate a new church in downtown Havana. Fidel Castro pulled out all the stops and Bartholomew was, according to press reports, the perfect guest. Despite appeals from brave dissidents for a meeting, despite the hundreds, if not thousands, in Castro's jails for challenging his tyranny, despite the regular protests of Jaime Cardinal Ortega y Alamino against the regime's denial of freedom, Bartholomew said nothing that might upset his dictator host. By way of sharpest contrast, John Paul II in Cuba repeatedly called for religious freedom,

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respect for rights of parents and families, democratic accountability, and the release of prisoners. Yes, an Orthodox friend tells me, but we must remember that the two are in very different positions. John Paul commands the world stage as leader of more than a billion Catholics, while Bartholomew, for all the traditional dignity of his office, is holed up in the back streets of Istanbul and lives day by day at the sufferance of a hostile Turkish government and people. That is true enough. (The sorry plight of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is vividly depicted in William Dalrymple's splendid book, *From the Holy Mountain* [1999]). But the fact remains that, for all of Bartholomew's besieged circumstance, including also a frequently unfriendly and very powerful Moscow Patriarchate, he is the nominal leader of Orthodox Christianity. He came to a country where fellow Christians are persecuted, jailed, and summarily executed, and he said not a word. He diligently followed the script given him by his criminal host, and that—all mitigating circumstances notwithstanding—is both disappointing and scandalous.

■ Twenty-three priests in the Chicago area sent out an open letter protesting what they said was the use of harsh and insensitive language in Vatican documents on homosexuality. Francis Cardinal George responded by saying that we must indeed be careful about the language we use, and then he added this: "Pastors have to mediate the tension between welcoming people and calling them to change, to repent and convert and live according to Christ's teaching transmitted by the Church. That tension is often resolved in practice by a pastor's love for his people. I thank you for loving your people. If, however, you cannot resolve that tension between welcoming people as they are and still calling them to leave their sinfulness and become saints, or if you yourself do not accept the Church's moral teaching on the moral use of the gift of sexuality, it would be all the more important for us to talk." There is no report on how many priests have called for an appointment.

■ A conference on women's rights in Saudi Arabia is a delicate business. But it happened recently in Jidda, and the Grand Mufti Sheik Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Sheik, considered to be Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority, was not amused. "Allowing women to mix with men is the root of every evil and catastrophe," he said. "It is highly punishable. Mixing of men and women is a reason for greater decadence and adultery." Muhammad, he suggested, would be exceedingly displeased by the conference. At the meeting a different perspective on allowing women to mix with men was offered by former president Bill Clinton. According to the *New York Times*, he said that "Saudi Arabia could not fight the 'tide of change' and that the Prophet Muhammad would have let his wife drive if cars had existed 1,400 years ago." (Women are banned from driving in Saudi Arabia.) So the question is: What would Muhammad do? Sheik Abdulaziz's views seem somewhat extreme, but one can readily imagine, and sympathize with, his opinion of Mr. Clinton as an authority on Islamic teaching—or, for that matter, Christian teaching—on how men and women should and should not mix.

■ *Letters to a Young Catholic* is George Weigel's latest. Just out from Basic (262 pp., $22.50), it is in the publisher's series of "Letters to . . ."—a young conservative, a young radical, a young this or that. Weigel's *The Courage to be Catholic* has been a big hit, and I expect the new book will make a similar mark. Like *Courage*, it presents Catholic fidelity as a challenge and invitation to the high adventure of Christian discipleship. But this book is more autobiographical, even confessional, in character. It takes the reader on a tour of the places and people and practices that have formed the author's understanding of what it means to be Catholic, in the hope of conveying to the young reader the "feel" of the particular and palpable "stuff" of Catholic faith and life. There is the Holy Land, and Chartres, and Newman's oratory, and the Scavi in Rome where St. Peter is buried. There is also the youth ministry of the Dominicans in Krakow, Poland, and the cathedral in Weigel's hometown of Baltimore, as well as a visit to a vibrantly Catholic parish in Greenville, South Carolina. Here is the Church, Weigel is saying, and in this Church is to be discovered, in its fullness and variousness, the presence of Christ and the maddeningly different ways of responding to Christ. It is a marvelous book, a great gift for young people of your acquaintance. But be sure to get a copy for yourself as well. Here is a taste: "That's the truth shining through the ineffable blues of the Chartres windows. That's the truth that makes every icon possible. That is grace at work—God's outpouring of his superabundant life into the world and into our lives. Like Augustine, we, too, burn for the embrace of the Beauty that is ever ancient and ever new. That burning, which God himself has built into us, is the beginning of every prayer." *Letters to a Young Catholic*. I warmly recommend it.

■ "Sexual Abuse in Social Context" is a report issued by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. It was published in anticipation of the comprehensive report by the National Review Board

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which has not been issued as of this writing. The Catholic League document is aimed at countering the media "obsession" with sexual abuse by Catholic priests, suggesting that the incidence of abuse is somewhat higher for Protestant clergy, rabbis, and psychologists, and much higher for public school teachers. It underscores what is undoubtedly true, that most sexual abuse is perpetrated by family members or people known to the family. The Catholic League report is well intended but largely beside the point. Nobody doubts that "inappropriate sexual behavior" is widespread, but the Catholic scandal is about men engaging in sex with minors. Moreover, it is about Catholic priests doing so, and priests are rightly held to a higher standard. Finally, the reality would seem to be that the overwhelming majority of instances involve teenage boys, from which one may surmise that the problem is homosexual priests who act on their desire to have sex with teenage boys. Good intentions notwithstanding, no report on "social context" can mitigate that horror. This is not the time for Catholics to circle the wagons, shooting *tu quoque* arrows at their critics. The assault on the integrity of the Church comes from within. Conservatives focused on countering anti-Catholicism and liberals focused on countering gay-bashing join in suggesting that the crisis is not so grave as it has been made out to be. They are both wrong.

■ Forget about the slander that it is anti-Semitic. It appears that the problem with Mel Gibson's film on the passion is that it's too pro-Christian. The Rev. Paul Rutger, director of the Council of Religious Leaders in Chicago, saw an advance screening and said, "Personally, I have mixed feelings about the movie. It's clearly a message movie. And the message is 'I believe in Jesus as the Son of God.' It's straight-out evangelical, Jesus-died-for-your-sins." Aha. So that's what Gibson's up to. Clearly, the film should be accompanied by an advisory giving fair warning to the Christianly challenged.

■ "The book doesn't say much that we didn't already know," one reader wrote. Christopher Baglow of St. Joseph Seminary College in Louisiana also started out with the prejudice that the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) volume *Your Word is Truth* could hardly say anything about the relationship between Scripture and tradition that has not been said many times before. Reviewing the book for *Nova et Vetera*, he changed his mind: "Yet reading only a few pages of *Your Word is Truth* is enough to turn both disdain and discomfort into eager attention, and to stand ordinary theological prejudices on their heads. The depth of insight in the essays collected in this volume is distinguished by an all-too-rare pairing of virtues: theological astuteness and ecumenical charity. In regard to the first, the volume justifies the reputations of the distinguished Evangelical and Catholic theologians who dutifully and diligently entered the discussion. In regard to the second, every individual contribution justifies, from page to page, the frequent assertions of an earnest and common desire for unity *in the truth* which permeate the joint statement that begins it." He concludes with the suggestion that the ECT participants should "compose a joint statement on the method and spirit of dialogue they employ, so that other ecumenical enterprises can benefit from the example of their excellent approach." We're thinking about it.

■ Good news, according to the advertising magazine *Brandweek*. Focus-group studies show that products advertised on "edgy" television programs do not suffer significant damage to their image. "Edgy" is the new word for vulgar. Advertisers used to worry that the sleaze would rub off on their products. But now, *Brandweek* declares, "marketers can get a bang for their buck buying into edgy programs." What matters morality, never mind good taste, when the alternative is a bang for the buck?

■ In what sense is America an empire? Or should it be an empire in any sense of the term? To the second question, Andrew Bacevich of Boston University and a contributor to these pages, answers with a qualified No, but in the new book he has edited, *The Imperial Tense* (Ivan R. Dee), he gives ample space to those who answer with an outright, or variously qualified, Yes. Most of the essays are interesting, several are outstanding, but my attention was drawn particularly to "A Citizen's Response" by Wendell Berry. Berry is a Kentucky farmer and prolific writer on How We Live Now, and how we should be living. From time to time, readers who admire Berry have wondered why we don't pay more attention to his work, although there have been favorable mentions. I confess that what I have read of Berry strikes me as a too easy proposing of beguiling alternatives in a manner too often marred by wistful sentimentality and moral smugness. But people whose judgment I respect tell me I'm wrong, and so I—possessed of an irrepressible eagerness to be corrected—went immediately to his essay in *The Imperial Tense*. Berry takes as his text the statement on National Security Strategy (NSS) published in September 2002, which declares the U.S. intention to work with the international community, but then adds that "we will not hesitate to act alone, if neces-

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sary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists." Who is this "we," asks Berry, and then answers his question: "This 'we' of the new strategy can refer only to the president. It is a royal 'we.' . . . By this new doctrine, the president alone may start a war against any nation at any time." And just who are these "terrorists" (quotes in original)? The NSS document defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents." To which Berry responds, "The 'legitimate' warfare of technologically advanced nations likewise is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents." Plus, there are many other forms of terrorism. "I mean such things as toxic pollution, land destruction, soil erosion, the destruction of biological diversity and of the ecological supports of agriculture," writes Berry. In the NSS document there is "the contradiction of peace and war, or of war as the means of achieving and preserving peace. This document affirms peace; it also affirms peace as the justification of war and war as the means of peace, and thus perpetuates a hallowed absurdity." The document notes that the U.S. has not accepted the jurisdiction of the new International Criminal Court. Berry comments: "The rule of law in the world, then, is to be upheld by a nation that has declared itself to be above the law. A childish hypocrisy here assumes the dignity of a nation's foreign policy." He acknowledges that September 11 was a "catastrophe," but observes, "It is useless to try to adjudicate a long-standing animosity by asking who started it or who is the most wrong." I am sorry, but this is moral recklessness of a drearily predictable and partisan nature. Berry's unfortunate essay notwithstanding, *The Imperial Tense* is well worth reading for other and more bracing arguments, pro and con, on whether or in what sense America is an empire.

■ The life of Francis Thompson was in many ways a shambles, but I am impressed by the number of people for whom "The Hound of Heaven" was instrumental in drawing them, or returning them, to the faith. Continuum has now brought out *The Poems of Francis Thompson*, and Neil Powell, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, wonders why. "The Hound of Heaven" he describes as "that pious dog's dinner of a piece," and he cites approvingly the judgment of Geoffrey Grigson that the poem is the "wild half-digested gush" of a drug addict dominated by "indolence and self-delusion." Well, that is a bit over-the-top. In the late 1870s, Powell writes, Thompson became addicted to opium and his family life disintegrated around him. "His mother died in 1879, six years later—when one of his sisters entered a convent, the other became engaged to a Canadian, and his father was planning his own remarriage—Thompson fled to London," where he became destitute and was provided refuge by a prostitute. I don't know why having a sister getting engaged to a Canadian is a sign of disintegration. Powell rather grudgingly acknowledges that Thompson did get off some good lines. For instance, this: "Nothing begins, and nothing ends, / That is not paid with moan; / For we are born in others' pain, / And perish in our own." I don't know Neil Powell, but one gets the distinct impression that what he most dislikes about Francis Thompson is that he knew himself to be a sinner who was finally compelled to surrender to the persistence of grace.

■ Now here is something as welcome as it is unusual. I am not aware of any government publication quite like it. *Being Human* is a 628-page collection of readings put together by the President's Council on Bioethics, under the leadership of the formidable Dr. Leon Kass. The selections from world literature, philosophy, ethics, and poetry are exquisitely judicious. Although from a multitude of different perspectives, each selection homes in on one or another aspect of what it means to be human, which of course is the fundamental question that the Council was established to address. It's a very big book divided into ten chapters. The first, on human perfection, includes Hawthorne's story about the birthmark, C. S. Lewis on "that hideous strength," and Lewis Thomas on the importance of making mistakes. The second, on "scientific aspirations," includes Descartes, a touching memoir by E. O. Wilson, and James Watson's chilling account of the discovery of the structure of DNA. On the human life cycle we have Plato, St. Augustine, and Tolstoy (the last making several appearances in the volume). On suffering, there is Auden and Shakespeare and Francis Bacon, among others, while the meaning of human dignity is addressed by Willa Cather, Homer, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. And so it goes, on and on. (But where is Dostoevsky?) My worry about this big book is that some might use it as CliffsNotes, sampling the well-chosen excerpts and bypassing the original texts. Each excerpt comes with some well-formulated questions for further reflection, and the whole thing makes for several evenings of instructively pleasant reading. To obtain a copy of *Being Human,* visit the website of the President's Council on Bioethics (*info@bioethics.gov*).

■ The problem with Michael Novak is his "Marxian sentimentality." That, according to Scott Richert, an editor at *Chronicles*, a magazine published in Rock-

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ford, Illinois. What is worth noting is that the *Wanderer*, a conservative Catholic paper, thinks Richert is right. The *Wanderer* quotes Richert quoting Novak: "At one time, the major form of wealth in most places was land. . . . In our time economists affirm that the chief cause of the wealth of nations is not material at all, but knowledge, skill, know-how, what economists call 'human capital.'" That, writes Richert, is "denying the material nature of property" and is clear evidence of Novak's succumbing to "gnostic notions" that are in manifest dissent from Catholic social doctrine. Novak is not alone in dissenting from church teaching. Consider this: "In our time another form of ownership . . . is becoming no less important than land: the possession of know-how, technology, and skill. The wealth of industrialized nations is based much more on this kind of ownership than on natural resources." That's John Paul II in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. That papal encyclicals are not read at *Chronicles* is perhaps not surprising, but at the *Wanderer*?

■ While a prisoner in the Tower of London awaiting his certain execution, Thomas More reflected on, among many other things, the perfidy of the English bishops who signed the oath accepting King Henry as the supreme head of the Church in England. Only one, John Fisher, refused, and he paid with his life. More's words are hard, but he never for a moment doubted that the bishops are successors to the apostles, which only makes their perfidy all the greater. More was struck by the words of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 7: "For the sorrow that is according to God produces repentance that surely tends to salvation, whereas the sorrow that is according to the world produces death." The second kind of sorrow was evident in the bishops who buckled in the face of what they viewed as the inevitable. The following is from a fine little collection edited by Matthew Levering, *On the Priesthood*. Thomas More writes: "If sorrow so grips the mind that its strength is sapped and reason gives up the reins, if a bishop is so overcome by heavy-hearted sleep that he neglects to do what the duty of his office requires for the salvation of his flock—like a cowardly ship's captain who is so disheartened by the furious din of a storm that he deserts the helm, hides away cowering in some cranny, and abandons the ship to the waves—if a bishop does this, I would certainly not hesitate to juxtapose and compare his sadness with the sadness that leads, as Paul says, to hell. Indeed, I would consider it far worse, since such sadness in religious matters seems to spring from a mind which despairs of God's help." As John Paul II may or may not have said in another connection (Mel Gibson's *The Passion*), "It is as it was."

■ Tom and Ann Belser Brown write in the *Messenger*, a magazine of the Church of the Brethren: "We have had an END WAR license plate on our car since 1985 in Mississippi. When we moved to Indiana in 2001, we transferred that phrase to our new plate. A few months later, we joyfully found out that some good friends in Jackson took the END WAR for their Mississippi car tag. Unfortunately, war continues." Even after all that?

■ A Wisconsin reader writes that his cable television now shows pay-per-view gay and lesbian films. "We subscribe to cable. It is our only source for television. Have we a moral duty to cancel now that it has embraced sodomy? This raises, of course, the much larger question about Christian responsibilities in a pagan culture. To what degree must we retreat?" First, we should be careful about being unfair to the pagans of antiquity, who were in some respects morally exemplary. Second, why is sodomy the line in the sand when television has long been promoting promiscuity, adultery, divorce, abortion, and egregious violence? I have considerable respect for people who have long since pitched out their television sets. I have one but often go days without looking at it. Not as a form of moral protest, but just because there is so little on offer that can compete with all the books to read, music to listen to, and friends to talk with. In any event, we should not retreat, except in the sense of making a retreat to be strengthened in doing battle, even if that takes the form of simply living a life attuned to things more worthy. There have been televised moments that I am glad I did not miss. But it is good to remember that television, like newspapers and most other media, are businesses aimed at making a profit by attracting paying crowds. They are marketing their products, which is to say they pander to the degree that it does not jeopardize their market. And they pitch themselves ever lower in a society that is, in the nice phrase of the late Senator Moynihan, defining deviancy down. Those in charge do their best to feel good, indeed righteous, about what they are doing, knowing that every deviancy indulged, every taboo defied, will be celebrated by their peers as daring creativity and a blow for liberty. The television of countries such as Germany and France shows how far this can go. We are not there yet, but we may be on our way. There is much to be said for pitching out the set, or putting it in the closet, only to be very occasionally retrieved for viewing things of great moment. Prime time should be reserved for the aforementioned books, music, friends, and, of course, this journal. As for not watching television, it is not so much a matter of moral principle as knowing how little you have missed.

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■ In time for the edification of another generation there may appear a new sacramentary with, at the insistence of the Congregation for Divine Worship, rites and prayers more accurately translated from the Latin. *Adoremus Bulletin* quotes Dorothy Sayers, author of the Lord Peter Wimsey detective novels and much else, on the difficulties in writing good prayers. "It isn't so much liturgical or theological knowledge that is lacking as the ability to write good English, and I refuse to believe that God is well served, or a spirit of worship promoted, by knock-kneed, broken-backed phrases that sound as though they were written by a tired journalist in a hurry." That is a depressingly fair description of the language with which Catholics have been burdened for several decades. In addition to liturgical and theological knowledge, along with accuracy of translation, one hopes the promised sacramentary will reflect a decent respect for felicity in the use of a language capable of honoring God and elevating souls, if we will but let it.

■ "Secularism, Justice, and Jesuit Higher Education—Are They All the Same?" The article is in *Review for Religious*, and the answer to the question would seem to be in the affirmative. The particular issue addressed is globalization and the inequalities created by capitalism. Father Martin R. Tripole, S.J. writes, "The perception seems to be that Jesuit higher education is not adequately committing itself to the pursuit of justice and something must be done about it. The pressure has grown to make the promotion of justice the litmus test for qualifying as a Jesuit institution. . . . In short, if your institution is not promoting justice, it is not Jesuit." Fr. Tripole is surely justified in being worried about Jesuit higher education. To borrow his fine phrase, something must be done about it.

■ Mark Judge writes in *Crisis* that, having given away yet another copy of Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, he went out to buy a new one, to which has been added an introduction by William H. Shannon, president of the International Thomas Merton Society. Merton's book is, of course, a conversion story, and some have gone so far as to compare it with Augustine's *Confessions*. Shannon, however, seems downright embarrassed by Merton's conversion, and perhaps by the very idea of conversion, as though one form of religion might be more "true" than others. Shannon writes: "The pre-Vatican II Church into which Merton was baptized was a Church still reacting—even three centuries later—to the Protestant Reformation. Characterized by a siege mentality, wagons circled around doctrinal and moral absolutes, it clung to its past with great tenacity. . . . The Church prided itself on the stability and unchangeable character of its teaching in the context of a world in flux. At the time Merton wrote his book, Roman Catholic theology had become a set of prepackaged responses to any and all questions. Polemical and apologetic in tone, its aim is to prove Catholics were right and all others were wrong." Oh dear. Merton went so far as to think he was being received into the "one true Church" (in sneer quotes). Oh dear, dear. All is not lost, however. Shannon goes on: "Today, as we hover on the verge of a new millennium, we can identify with his searching, if not always with the specific direction it took. Merton's personal magnetism, the enthusiasm of his convictions, the vivid narratives of this born writer, transcend the narrowness of his theology. His story contains perennial elements of our common human experience. This is what makes it profoundly universal." But agree with Merton or not, the entire story of his book is about "the specific direction" of his searching and finding. For Merton, the "profoundly universal" was discovered in the Church. For Shannon, as for so many in an Oprahfied popular culture, the fatuously universal is the discovery of Me. Catholicism is a living tradition and much has changed since Merton's book was published in 1948, but I expect Mark Judge is right when he writes, "I daresay that in a hundred years Shannon's introduction will seem far more dated than the book it so ineptly introduces."

■ Quite suddenly, it seems, there are four imminent developments of most particular interest to a magazine of religion, culture, and public life. Each has the potential of being a benchmark of historic change. Not necessarily in order of importance they are the response to Mel Gibson's *The Passion*, the campaign for the marriage amendment, the report of the National Review Board on the Catholic scandals (and the responses to it), and the prospect of John Kerry being the Democratic nominee. Many churches and parachurch organizations are gearing up to make *The Passion* a box-office success. Some, such as the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, appear to be putting the anxieties of Jewish organizations ahead of the proclamation of the gospel and are actually warning against the film. An important question is whether the film will generate in our public culture, for the first time in living memory, a serious discussion of the meaning of Christ and his crucifixion. The marriage amendment continues to gain steam and will likely play a significant part in the presidential campaign. A critical question is whether it can

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avoid being stigmatized as an anti-gay measure. That will depend in large part on whether the argument is successfully made that homosexual unions and other domestic arrangements fall into the category of friendships. Friendships can be healthy or not, but it is not the government's business to certify or regulate friendships. By way of sharpest contrast, marriage has always and everywhere been recognized as a legitimate and necessary public concern. As for the National Review Board, there are two reports scheduled for February 27. The first is the report on the research done by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice on the pertinent data—how many offenses, how many victims, the circumstances of offenses, etc. At least six dioceses declined to participate in that study because they claim it was not mandatory, because it would risk violating confidentiality and impugning the innocent, and because it does not include the one-third of priests who are in religious orders. Much more important is the report of the National Review Board itself, and the episcopal responses to the report. Finally, if John Forbes Kerry is the nominee, be prepared for a historic rectification of what happened when the first JFK ran for the presidency. He dealt with the "Catholic question" by assuring the Baptist ministers of Houston that his faith was entirely a private matter and would have no bearing on his conduct in office. Catholic leaders didn't like that but they bit their tongues, so eager were they to see Catholicism culturally legitimated by having one of their own in the White House. That was nearly half a century ago. Since then, many developments—most notably *Roe v Wade* and the related life questions—have dramatically changed the Church's relationship to the elite culture. Some bishops are at last beginning to act like bishops in speaking out on the moral malfeasance of Catholic politicians who freely, knowingly, publicly, and persistently defy the Church's teaching. Unlike the first JFK, Kerry will almost certainly not get a free pass from the Church. And history having many ironies in the fire, this time the Baptists and other Evangelicals will be cheering on the bishops in their effort to make clear that Christian faith has inescapably public implications. All very interesting, all of potentially historic significance, and on all four developments there will be much more in forthcoming issues.

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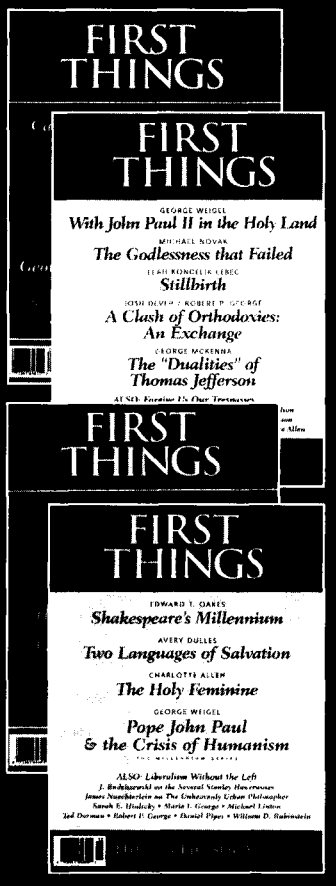

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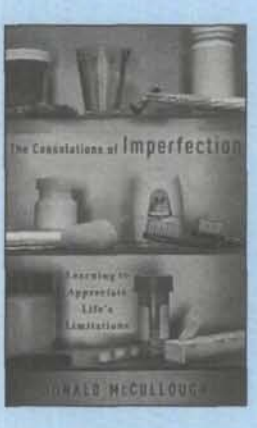

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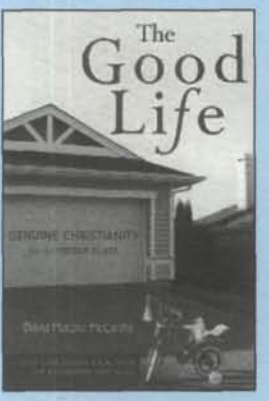

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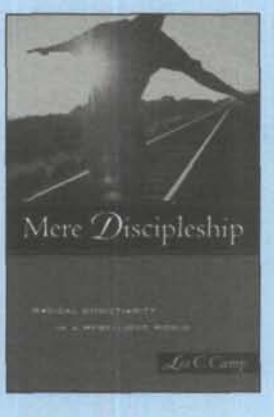

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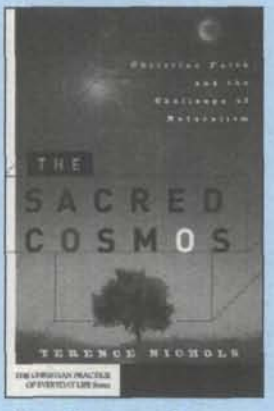

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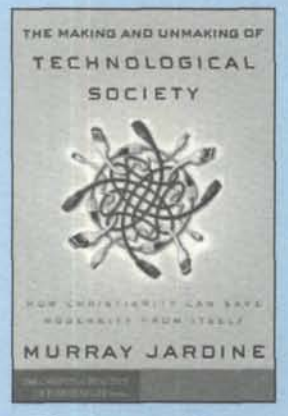

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